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## LOGICAL POSITIVISM (II).

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"PHILOSOPHY", writes Alexander, "differs from the sciences nowise in its spirit but only in its boundaries, in dealing with certain comprehensive features of experience which lie outside the purview of the special sciences". And again, "Metaphysics is not the less a science for this difference, but it is concerned with the ultimates which the sciences leave out".<sup>1</sup> These quotations will serve to illustrate the sort of position against which the logical positivists direct their main controversial energies. Philosophy, they set out to show, cannot be a science; and there are no "comprehensive features of experience", no ultimates, which lend themselves to scientific discussion and yet "fall outside the purview of the special sciences".

### Philosophy and Science.

The history of philosophy, so Schlick maintains,<sup>2</sup> is sufficient to show that it cannot be science. It is true that philosophers consult books, frame hypotheses, argue with one another, for all the world as if they were scientists; but what always gives them away is that this "research" does nothing to *settle* the problems on which they believe themselves to be working. Meanwhile, the historic task of philosophy is left unperformed—the task which Socrates was the first deliberately to undertake. "He did not usually arrive at certain definite truths which would appear at the end of the dialogue but the whole investigation was carried on for the primary

<sup>1</sup> *Space, Time and Deity* (Introd., p. 4, and Preface to Second Impression, p. vii).

<sup>2</sup> *The Future of Philosophy*, reprinted in his "Gesammelte Aufsätze". (All references to Schlick are to essays in this volume.)

purpose of making clear what was meant when certain questions were asked or certain words were used . . . In short, Socrates' philosophy consists of what we might call 'the pursuit of meaning'. He tried to clarify our thought by analysing the meaning of our expressions and the real sense of our propositions" (p. 128).

It should be left to science, then, to pursue truth; philosophy is the pursuit of meaning. Not that philosophy *states* meanings or develops a *theory* of meaning. If it did, it would after all be a science, the science of meaning. But there can be no "science of meaning" because "the discovery of the meaning of a proposition must ultimately be achieved by some act, some immediate procedure, for instance, the showing of yellow, it cannot be given in a proposition" (p. 130). Thus philosophy is not a theory, but a procedure.

This contrast between theorising and analysing is not meant to suggest that it is improper for the scientist to analyse. On the contrary, it was Newton who analysed "mass" and Einstein who first made it clear what is meant by "simultaneity". Certain tasks, it is true, fall naturally to the lot of the professional philosopher:

1. to dispel nonsense. "The right method of philosophy", says Wittgenstein,<sup>3</sup> "would be this. To say nothing except what can be said, i.e. the propositions of natural science, i.e. something that has nothing to do with philosophy; and then always, when someone wished to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he had given no meaning to certain signs in his propositions. This method would be unsatisfying to the other—he would not have the feeling that we were teaching him philosophy—but it would be the only strictly correct method" (6.53).

2. to undertake the clarifications which must precede the development of a new science. "We can understand historically", writes Schlick, "why in ancient times philosophy was identical with science; this was because at that time the

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<sup>3</sup> All references to "Wittgenstein" are to the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.



concepts which were used in the description of the world were extremely vague" (p. 132). The "concepts" of ethics and aesthetics are still vague, and, for that reason, these are fields within which the philosopher can profitably work.

But except when he is helping to lay the dust his predecessors have raised or acting as the frontiersman of science, the philosopher should be content with the rôle of pedagogue. His work is the training of scientists. "We shall teach the sciences and their history in the true philosophical spirit of searching for clarity and, by doing this, we shall develop the philosophical minds of future generations" (p. 133). So writes Schlick, and again, that if his views are accepted, "the result would be that no more books would be written about philosophy, but all books would be written in a philosophical manner".<sup>4</sup>

Now, few philosophers would quarrel with Schlick's view that science ought to be taught philosophically and most, I imagine, would agree that a "philosophical scientist" is, above all, one who is critical of his assumptions, who is not at the mercy of his technical terms. Nor, whatever scientists might think about it, would many philosophers wish to deny that it is one of the main duties of the philosopher to encourage the development of critical thinking within the special sciences. All that is peculiar to Schlick and Wittgenstein is the *identification* of philosophy and critical thinking; what I shall maintain against them is that the philosopher can encourage the development of critical thinking only because he has his own subject-matter, that subject-matter including, although not coinciding with, the theory of "clarification".

How otherwise, indeed, is the philosopher to demonstrate that nonsense is being talked? He can scarcely *point* to the absence of meaning; he cannot use "the propositions of natural science" in his demonstrations, because from them only further propositions of natural science are deducible; he cannot argue with the help of truths he derives from the *Tractatus*, for "My

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<sup>4</sup> Quoted by G. C. Field, *The Teaching of Philosophy* (Proc. Ar. Soc., Supp. Vol. XVI, p. 3).

propositions are elucidatory in this way: he who understands me finally regards them as senseless" (6.54). Like Cratylus, he may wag his finger; but let him open his mouth and at once he is either "a natural scientist" or else he is talking nonsense. Nevertheless, since he cannot teach by wagging his finger, the philosopher is compelled to talk nonsense, even to write books, in order to persuade other people that he has nothing to say. He cannot teach his rules to other people without breaking them himself.

"For he talks nonsense, numerous statements makes,  
Forever his own vow of silence breaks."<sup>5</sup>

This difficulty attaches not only to the formulation of a general *theory* of meaning, but also to the detailed work of clarification. Newton and Einstein, to take Schlick's own examples, exhibited their clarifications in books; and if this could not be done, if clarifications were incommunicable except by pointing, they could play no part in the collective work of science. Like the sages of Laputa, the analyst could "discuss" only what he carried around with him.

Clearly, there is something wrong with any account of meaning which leads to conclusions as paradoxical as these; and what is wrong is the theory of "ultimate meanings" on which the whole theory rests.<sup>6</sup> Even if "ultimately" communication by language is possible only because there are other sorts of communication as well (gestures, actions in common, "sympathetic induction", and the like), this does not imply that clarification will ordinarily be (or ought to be, or "ultimately" is) a matter of making gestures. Clarifications occur within language; they are brought forward by people already acquainted with a language and understood by those who know the same language. It is true that they may then be misunderstood; but so may pointings be misunderstood.<sup>7</sup> (If

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<sup>5</sup> Julian Bell, *Epistle on the Ethical and Aesthetic Views of Herr Ludwig Wittgenstein*.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. the first of these articles (this Journal, Dec., 1943) for a fuller account and criticism of the positivist theory of meaning.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Ramsey, "We can make several things clearer, but we cannot make anything clear" (*Foundations of Mathematics*, p. 268), and Stebbing, *Logical Positivism and Analysis* (Proc. Br. Ac., 1933).



"contents" and "atomic facts" cannot be misunderstood, that is only because they cannot be known at all.)<sup>8</sup>

Once it is seen that "clarifications" are not infra-propositional, then it also becomes obvious that "clarification" cannot properly be contrasted with "discovery", the "pursuit of meaning" with the "pursuit of truth". To talk of "clarification" makes it appear that we are concerned with what (but "obscurely") "we have really known all the time". But to make anything clearer (be it word, usage or some other fact) is to discover something about it which we did not know before. The *techniques* of clarification may be different from the techniques of laboratory work;<sup>9</sup> but in either case we can proceed only by drawing attention to facts.

This is true whatever is meant by "clarification" or "analysis". Take, for example, the three sorts of analysis which Wisdom<sup>10</sup> distinguishes—Material, Formal and Philo-

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<sup>8</sup> This is an old difficulty in rationalism; in its search for a certainty which is unquestionable, it ends by making knowledge of any sort impossible. It cannot be too strongly emphasised that positivism is rationalistic in outlook. Cf. Reichenbach on Carnap: "His theory", he says, "may be regarded, after a fashion, as a modern fulfillment of Descartes' quest for an absolutely certain basis of science; and indeed Carnap's theory is reminiscent of Descartes' rationalism in more ways than one" (*Logistic Empiricism in Germany*, Jnl. of Philos., March 12, 1936, p. 149).

<sup>9</sup> It is apparently on such grounds that Neurath would distinguish between clarification and discovery. "Mach", he says, "succeeded in doing preparatory work for the theory of relativity, not by introducing new experimental statements, but by analysing scientific expressions" (*Universal Jargon and Terminology*, Proc. Ar. Soc., 1940-1). And similarly it might be argued that, in clarifying simultaneity, Einstein relied on facts we knew already (for example, that if a person at a point P experiences X and Y simultaneously, a person at a point Q nearer to X than P will experience X before Y). But to find such facts "important" is to discover new facts, novel relationships.

<sup>10</sup> *Is Analysis a Useful Method in Philosophy?* (Proc. Ar. Soc., Supp. Vol. XIII). Wisdom is a Cambridge analyst, not a Continental (now American) positivist. But both movements find their inspiration in Russell and in Wittgenstein and, as a natural consequence, there are many doctrines which they have in common. (Although positivism, under Carnap's leadership, has worked further and further away from the typical Cambridge pre-suppositions.) The study of either movement, therefore, throws considerable light upon the development of the other. Incidentally, it is interesting to observe the close parallelism between Wisdom's interpretations of "analysis" and Plato's interpretations of "logos" (*Theaetetus*, 201a to end). Analysis is yet another attempt to add an "account" to "true beliefs"; and Plato's criticism that the "account" would be *another* belief still applies.

sophical. Material and formal analysis need not long detain us. "Material analysis" is simply definition of the traditional sort. And although Wisdom speaks of it as being concerned "to render explicit the connotations" of the analysandum—with the hint in "explicit" that we knew these connotations ("implicity") beforehand—he recognises that it demands special knowledge from the analyst. "Formal analysis" is the much-abused exercise of "putting statements into logical form", grown respectable again.<sup>11</sup> It consists in substituting for a given sentence some other sentence which more adequately displays, by its form, the structure of the fact which both sentences mean. Clearly, such translations have to be *discovered* by investigating the structure of facts and the usages of the English language, so that formal analysis, as well as material analysis, is a species of scientific discovery.

"Philosophical analysis", unlike material and formal analysis, is "new-level"; the terms in the analysis, according to Wisdom, are more ultimate than those in the analysandum. He illustrates what he means by "more ultimate". "Individuals", he writes, "are more ultimate than nations. Sense-data and mental states are in their turn more ultimate than individuals. Similarly judgments (meaning particular events in individual minds) are more ultimate than propositions, and facts (complete) than incomplete facts, and your credit and my credit than Credit, and Bob's belief that you can fulfil your promises to pay than your credit" (p. 77).

This is the sort of analysis the positivists usually have in mind when they speak of "clarification". What drives them from one unstable position to another is their attempt to settle upon a satisfactory "ultimate"; and, along with that, to decide whether analysis "reduces the number of entities" or merely discovers complicated relationships between distinct entities.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Ramsey thought that this was the philosophical sort of analysis. He calls Russell's theory of definite descriptions "that paradigm of philosophy". But Wisdom relegates it to the specialist in logic.

<sup>12</sup> Logical positivism, as we saw in the first of these articles, has shifted from one ultimate to another—from experience, by way of basic facts, to protocol sentences and "scientific decisions". Cambridge analysis, on the



These are the problems characteristic of rationalism.<sup>13</sup> In terms of meaning, if the analysis has the same meaning as the analysandum, how are they different? If they have different meanings, in what sense is one the analysis of the other? In "formal" analysis these difficulties do not arise, since there can clearly be two different ways of expressing the same fact. But once talk about "analysing facts"; once speak as if "tables" and "sense-data" are both facts, but one "more ultimate" than the other, and the difficulty of either distinguishing or identifying the two facts is insuperable.

"Philosophical analysis", if there were such a thing, would consist in *finding out* to what ultimates a given complex is reducible. The analysts obscure this point by concentrating on the analysis of "common-sense"; it is easy to forget that we once had to *discover* the characteristics of tables. But it emerges indirectly when Ayer remarks<sup>14</sup> that "if many of us are obliged to confine ourselves to the analysis of commonsense propositions, it is not on any logical ground, but on the practical ground that we are ignorant of science". Even if, as Ayer goes on to suggest, the analyst is not concerned with tables, except by way of illustration, but with propositional functions of the form "x is a material thing", the same point holds good. He will need to make observations in order to discover what is common to material things (or, not to beg this question, in what sentences the phrase "material things" appears). And he has now on his hands the problem: with which particular propositional functions must the philosopher concern himself?

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contrary, remains faithful to "sense-data" and "mental states" but is preoccupied with the problem of deciding in what sense the "less ultimate" none the less ultimately *is*. Cf. the rest of this contribution of Wisdom's; A. E. Duncan Jones, *Does Philosophy Analyse Common Sense?* (Proc. Ar. Soc., Supp. Vol. XVI); S. Stebbing, *Some Problems About Analysis* (Proc. Ar. Soc., 1938-9).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Plato's *Parmenides*. The theory of forms tries to "save" particulars, but cannot then explain precisely *what* relationship holds between particulars and forms, considered as distinct entities, nor how the ultimacy of the forms can itself be "saved".

<sup>14</sup> *Does Philosophy Analyse Common Sense?* (p. 165). See also A. H. S. Coombe-Tennant, *Mr. Wisdom on Philosophical Analysis* (*Mind*, Oct., 1936).

Ayer attempts to answer this question. "The commonsense propositions", he says, "which call for philosophical analysis are those which are formulated in such a way that they encourage us to draw false inferences, or to ask spurious questions, or to make nonsensical assumptions. Thus questions about nations call for it because they lead us to treat nations as if they were magnified persons, and propositions about material things call for it because they encourage belief in a physical world 'behind' the phenomena and propositions containing definite descriptive phrases call for it because they give rise to the postulation of subsistent entities, and existential propositions call for it because of the ontological argument. And philosophy, in one way or another, tries to remove all these dangers" (p. 174).

It appears, then, that the propositions which need analysis are those which lead to inferences which are false, to questions which are spurious, to assumptions which are nonsensical. And it follows that the analyst must begin by deciding which inferences *are* false, which questions *are* spurious, which assumptions *are* nonsensical: to particularise, he must argue against the validity of ontological arguments, must show that there are no "subsistent entities", that it is "nonsense" to talk of a physical world. In other words, the problems which confront him are precisely those which traditional philosophy has tried to answer; and until he finds some answer to them, the analyst does not know how to clarify our language.

The identification of philosophy with "analysis" or "clarification" fails, then, to fulfil the hopes which were placed in it by the positivists. It fails, in the first place, to provide a clear line of demarcation between philosophy as "the pursuit of meaning" and science as "the pursuit of truth"—because to pursue "meanings" is to pursue truth. It fails, secondly, to provide a way of avoiding the traditional problems of philosophy. For if by "analysis" is meant "philosophical analysis" then to say that such analysis is possible is already to be committed to a rationalistic philosophy (a philosophy of "ultimates"); if "formal analysis" is meant, then to decide



what propositions need analysis and how they are to be analysed is to put forward a philosophy, a theory of the structure (or structures) of facts.

But we have still to confront directly the positivist contention that unless philosophy is the method of analysis, there is nothing else it can be, that the traditional "problems of philosophy" are unanswerable *in principle*. We need not be much perturbed by Schlick's argument that if philosophical problems were answerable, they would by now have been answered. It is easy to exaggerate the extent of philosophical disagreement, just because philosophers are anxious to hammer out their differences and are not content with a spurious unanimity—the sort of "unanimity" which might better be called "univerbity" because its sole basis is the use of vague and ambiguous language (like "economic welfare"). And, in any case, unanimity is not to be expected, unless about comparatively minor matters, in any of the "moral sciences". The theory of the "Oedipus complex" is not shown to be unscientific merely because many "competent authorities" refuse to accept it as true; human passions are so deeply engaged, social pressures so intense, that it is rather the extent of agreement which is surprising. If only enquiries which issue in the "generally accepted" are to be accounted "scientific", the quack and the obscurantist have an open field.<sup>15</sup>

### The Rejection of Metaphysics.

Schlick's historical arguments against the possibility of philosophical theory are, then, easy enough to meet; but they are not intended to be, in themselves, decisive. They are meant rather as confirmation of the positivist thesis that the traditional problems of philosophy are not genuine problems at all, but pseudo-problems. In particular, the positivist sets out to show that what profess to be *metaphysical* assertions are without content, and are therefore nonsense. He admits that this is not true of "inductive metaphysics" — which attempts to discover very general, but empirical, hypotheses—

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *Philosophy and Science* (this Journal, Dec., 1939).

but metaphysics of this sort he takes to be "the risky, sanguine, disreputable extreme of science",<sup>16</sup> with nothing philosophical about it. It is not at all clear why "inductive metaphysics" is to be thus incontinently handed over to science. Presumably the argument is that "metaphysical" hypotheses of this sort are of precisely the same character (except that they are unusually sweeping) as what are admittedly scientific theories, and hence that there is no ground for distinguishing them as philosophical. And no doubt many theories have wrongly been accounted philosophical, merely because their range is wide.<sup>17</sup> But if by "very general propositions" we mean propositions *about what is general*, about the common features of things, then these *are* different from the hypotheses of the special sciences, just because these sciences are *special*. Such propositions have traditionally formed part of the subject-matter of philosophy; they may often emerge from the work of the special scientists, but there is not the slightest reason for abandoning them to the mercies of specialists.

When the positivist rejects metaphysics as meaningless, as distinct from condemning it as "risky and disreputable", he is thinking of it as a theory which, in Carnap's words, "claims to represent knowledge about something which is over and above all experience"<sup>18</sup> or which, as Schlick puts it, "aims at 'the inmost nature of things in themselves'" and thereby attempts "to express the inexpressible" (p. 197).

Schlick's recognition that metaphysics tries to go beyond the proposition, to find "natures" which can be intuited as "the meaning of things", draws attention to the *logical* character of metaphysical theories as Carnap's definition of metaphysics in *epistemological* terms does not. But Schlick exemplifies Bradley's dictum: "The man who is ready to prove that metaphysical knowledge is wholly impossible . . . is a brother

<sup>16</sup> Feigl, *Logical Empiricism* ("Twentieth Century Philosophy", p. 385). Compare Russell's demand for "the substitution of piecemeal, detailed and verifiable results for large untested generalities recommended only by a certain appeal to the imagination" and, for a criticism of this attitude to generalisations, Anderson, *Logic and Experience* (this journal, Dec., 1939).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Partridge, *Logic and Evolution* (this Journal, Sept., 1934).

<sup>18</sup> *Philosophy and Logical Syntax* (p. 15).



metaphysician with a rival theory of first principles." He does not abandon "inner natures" ("content") but objects only to the attempt to talk about them; he recognises that whatever can be said is "outer" but at the same time says there is an "inner".<sup>19</sup> That is the force of Neurath's "physicalist" criticism; Neurath's rejection, as metaphysical, of the contrast between "content" and "propositions". Later positivists, under the influence of Neurath's criticism, no longer talk of "content"; but they (Carnap especially) are still haunted by its ghost. For fear of evoking its terrors, and because they have never fully abandoned their earlier subjectivism, they define metaphysics in terms of experience rather than in terms of ultimates; and that, it may be argued, is one of the main reasons why they fail, in the end, to work out a thorough-going criticism of metaphysics.

And, of course, Schlick's own criticism of metaphysics has to be in terms of "experience"; he cannot attack the notion of "content" as illogical, because he accepts a content theory himself. All he can argue is that it is never possible for two persons to experience the same content, so that metaphysical assertions must be non-verifiable and therefore meaningless. No set of experiences can be indicated such that the having of these experiences would be equivalent to the truth of a metaphysical assertion.

A. C. Ewing<sup>20</sup> takes this criticism to be self-defeating. There is no set of experiences which are together equivalent to the truth of the principle of verifiability and therefore that principle must be quite as nonsensical as the metaphysics it is used to destroy. But the positivist would maintain that he has anticipated this criticism by denying that the principle is an assertion at all. "This insight", wrote Schlick, "is often called the experimental (or operational) theory of meaning

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<sup>19</sup> Like Ramsey's child. "Say breakfast." "Can't." "What can't you say?" "Can't say breakfast" (*Foundations*, p. 268). Anderson's *Empiricism* (this Journal, Dec., 1927), although it is a quite independent development, may serve to illustrate how Schlick's criticism of metaphysics as a theory of "natures" might be worked out.

<sup>20</sup> *Meaninglessness* (Mind, Vol. 46).

but I should like to point out that it would be unjust to call it by such an imposing name. A 'theory' consists of a set of propositions which you may believe or deny, but our principle is a simple triviality about which there can be no dispute. It is not even an 'opinion' since it indicates a condition without which no opinion can be formulated. It is not a theory, for its acknowledgement must precede the building of any theory" (p. 246).

But what is meant by speaking of "a simple triviality about which there can be no dispute"? Is the principle a tautology? Apparently not, because Schlick maintains that "our conception is not only entirely in agreement with, but even derived from, common sense and scientific procedure" (p. 341)—the principle, that is, describes empirical procedures (how meanings are found). Or is it merely that it is very easy to recognise the truth of the principle? Then this is irrelevant; however obvious its truth, if the principle is an assertion it must be verifiable.

Schlick has not the hardihood to deny outright that the principle is an assertion (though "only a little one"), and thus he lies open to Ewing's criticism, but this criticism needs considerable supplementation if it is to cope with Wittgenstein's view that the principle is no assertion at all (that it is nonsensical, though "important nonsense") or Carnap's view that the principle is a "syntactical recommendation". The more far-reaching objection is that *no* proposition has sense, if to have sense means to be reducible to a set of experiences<sup>21</sup>—or, at least, if this is questioned, that many

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. the first of these articles (this Journal, Dec., 1943). I omitted there to discuss the view that scientific laws are *prescriptions*. Thus Schlick: "a natural law does not possess the logical character of an 'assertion' but is rather 'an instruction for the formation of assertions'" (*Die Kausalität in der gegenwärtig Physik*, as translated by Carnap, *Testability and Meaning*, II). And this means, as Ramsey puts it, that universal propositions are "rules for judging 'If I meet a  $\phi$ , I shall regard it as a  $\psi$ '" (*General Propositions and Causality*, in *The Foundations of Mathematics*, p. 241). But:

1. All Ramsey has done is to substitute a universal judgment about my own future behaviour for one about the future behaviour of  $\phi$ . There is no logical gain in this. And if the imperative is used instead: "When you meet a  $\phi$ , regard it as a  $\psi$ " we shall naturally ask "Why should I?" The



non-metaphysical assertions (for example, "laws of nature") are not so reducible. It is for this reason that Carnap reformulates the principle and with it the criticism of metaphysics. He rejects metaphysical assertions not on the ground that they cannot be reduced to sets of experiences, but because there is no way of offering a *confirmation* of them. As it has more recently been put, they have no "predictive value".

"From the proposition: 'The Principle of the World is Water'", writes Carnap, "we are not able to deduce any proposition asserting any perceptions or feelings or experiences whatever which may be expected for the future. Therefore, the proposition, 'The Principle of the World is Water', asserts nothing at all. . . . Metaphysicians cannot avoid making their propositions non-verifiable, because if they made them verifiable, the truth or falsehood of their doctrines would depend on experience and therefore belong to the region of empirical science. This conclusion they wish to avoid, because they pretend to teach knowledge which is of a higher level than that of empirical science. Thus they are compelled to cut all connection between their propositions and experience; and precisely by this procedure they deprive them of all sense" (P.L.S., pp. 15-18).

But, as I have previously argued in this Journal,<sup>22</sup> the metaphysician does not admit that he has "cut all connection between his propositions and experience"; on the contrary, he is anxious to maintain that "experience" lends support, in various ways, to his metaphysical theories. The only meta-

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"problem of induction" which we are supposed to be avoiding reappears as a problem of justification.

2. This theory can give no account of the case when we abandon a natural law as false, or even of the (more common) case where we are led to say "this cannot be a  $\phi$ " because we find that it is not a  $\psi$ .

3. There is precisely the same difficulty in finding a "complete verification" of "this is a  $\phi$ " as there is in "completely verifying" that "if anything is a  $\phi$ , it is a  $\psi$ ". Hence this theory of generality does nothing to save the principle of verifiability, in its unmitigated form.

These points (especially the second and third) are recognised by Carnap, who therefore rejects this theory of generality (or at least regards it as an "unwise convention"). But there is some ground for suspecting that the theory still lingers on at Cambridge.

<sup>22</sup> *Philosophy and Science*.

physician Carnap criticises in detail is Heidegger;<sup>23</sup> but Heidegger is scarcely typical. Thales, for example, would support the view that "the principle of the world is water" by pointing out that when ice is heated, it turns into water,<sup>24</sup> and even Bradley, as Stedman<sup>25</sup> points out, maintains that "the doctrine which I hold I hold largely because it seems to me to remain more than others in harmony with life". It needs, then, to be shown that the metaphysician's "confirmations" are not genuine confirmations; it cannot be assumed that the metaphysician will not *try* to offer confirmations.

The principle of confirmability, in other words, may draw our attention to a condition which meaningful assertions must fulfil; it cannot, by itself, demonstrate that the assertions of metaphysics fail to fulfil these conditions. Even then, the principle of confirmability is less illuminating than Popper's principle of falsifiability, although, as we have seen, these two principles are formally equivalent. For to insist upon falsifiability is to insist that if metaphysical assertions have any sense, there must be some way of *refuting* them, as distinct from rejecting them. To put this criterion more generally, a genuine proposition must be discussable; it must be possible to subject it to criticism. But it has still to be shown that there is no way of discussing metaphysical assertions, that to discuss an assertion is automatically to regard it as presenting an empirical proposition.

Ayer attempts such a demonstration: "Let us consider the case of a man who claims to have an immediate, non-sensory experience of God. So long as he uses the word 'God' simply as a name for the content of this experience, I have no right to disbelieve him. . . . At the same time it must be remarked that 'God' in this usage, cannot be the name of a transcendent being. For to say that one was immediately acquainted with a transcendent being would be self-contradictory."

<sup>23</sup> See Weinberg's *Examination* (p. 185); cf. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (p. 36) for the same example.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy* (4th ed., p. 49).

<sup>25</sup> *A Defence of Speculative Philosophy* (Proc. Ar. Soc., 1937-8, p. 116); cf. Ewing (op. cit.).



dictory. And though it might be the name of a person who in fact endured for ever one could not say that one was immediately acquainted with Him as enduring for ever. For this, too, would be self-contradictory. Neither would the fact that people were acquainted with God, in this sense, afford a valid ground for inferring that the world had a first cause, or that human beings survive death, or in short that anything existed which had attributes which are popularly ascribed to God.”<sup>26</sup>

In the manner traditional to rationalism, then, Ayer hopes to show that “*x* is the confirmation of a metaphysical assertion” is always a self-contradictory proposition. Now, the metaphysician who is prepared to assert that “I can experience what it is impossible to experience” is no doubt guilty of a contradiction in terms—but few metaphysicians are so obliging. More commonly, it will be necessary for the positivist to prove that God, for example, *is* impossible to experience. This means that he will be forced to work out a theory of “the conditions of experience” or, more accurately, of the structure of facts. (The only condition of experience which is of any philosophical interest is that what is experienced must have the form of a fact.)

The metaphysician, indeed, attempts to connect his propositions with experience in a variety of ways, and the positivist has to show that this connection cannot consistently be sustained, that observation can neither give direct access to transcendental entities nor provide premises from which their existence can be inferred nor confirm metaphysical hypotheses.

That there is no way of “inferring entities”, many of the positivists have argued. Thus Blumberg and Feigl criticise the attempt to infer the existence of “physical objects” from the behaviour of “sense-data”. “Since deducibility is tautological”, they argue, “the conclusion cannot logically contain more than is asserted in the premise of the argument.”<sup>27</sup> Now, the metaphysician may well object to the assumption that

<sup>26</sup> *Verification and Experience* (Proc. Ar. Soc., 1936-7).

<sup>27</sup> *Logical Positivism* (Jnl. of Philos., May 21, 1931).

"deducibility" is tautological; but all that the positivist need really maintain is that the terms in the conclusion of any argument must either have appeared in the premises or be combinations of terms which have so appeared. (This is the force of Hume's point that "no reasoning can ever give us a new, original, simple idea".<sup>28</sup>) Hence no inference is possible from assertions about observable entities to assertions about unobservable entities. Thus *that there are true propositions containing the entity* (or, what I should take to be the same thing, that the entity exists) can never be proved. Similarly, it can neither be confirmed nor refuted, since confirmation or refutation also depends on the use of propositions containing the entity. And the positivist concludes that metaphysical assertions must be rejected as meaningless, since there is no way of discussing whether metaphysical entities exist at all.

The metaphysician, however, usually believes that he can make assertions about metaphysical entities without assuming that they exist, and can work from these assertions to a proof of the existence of the entities. Thus, beginning from the assertion that only if there are physical objects could sense-data behave in certain ways (e.g. regularly recur), he infers, by examining the nature of sense-data, that physical objects must exist. Once more, then, the positivist case is incomplete; it needs, as support, the argument that unless metaphysical entities can be directly observed, there is no way of telling what consequences would follow from their existence.<sup>29</sup> We can, of course, prove that an unobserved planet exists by considering its effects on the behaviour of other planets, but only because we are acquainted with the way planets operate and the conditions under which the operations are taking place. But we cannot deduce, from anything we observe, the existence of an entity with unprecedented characters, operating under unprecedented conditions. This point is approached by the positivists when they maintain<sup>30</sup> that analogical arguments

<sup>28</sup> *Enquiry*, Part I, §VII, footnote.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Anderson, *Empiricism*, pp. 252-3.

<sup>30</sup> Cf., for example, Blumberg and Feigl (op. cit.).



can never carry us from the behaviour of empirical entities to the behaviour of transcendental entities; for it is especially by the use of analogy that the metaphysician tries to persuade us that we need to invoke supra-empirical entities in order to understand the behaviour of what we observe.<sup>31</sup> But only by working out an empirical philosophy can the logical objections to such analogies be made clear. Argument of the positivist kind, which restricts itself to criticising the metaphysician's *method of proof*, needs to be supplemented by a direct consideration of the problem from which the metaphysician sets out, by argument to prove that the setting up of transcendental entities provides no solution to his problem, but merely multiplies his difficulties.<sup>32</sup>

This implies a close consideration of metaphysical theories, as distinct from Carnap's attitude of impatient dismissal. And by that means we shall also come to see the value of metaphysical theorising. As Wisdom puts it, "the philosopher should continually be trying to say what cannot be said";<sup>33</sup> only in this way can he discover whether it is logic or merely the conventional usage which restrains him. In metaphysical theories, the illogical and the unconventional are so entangled with one another that it is easy to criticise as illogical what is merely unconventional. And, as well, metaphysical theories are often empirical hypotheses, especially *social* hypotheses, in disguise; a close examination of what the metaphysician offers as confirmations will enable us to say what they *will* confirm as distinct from what the metaphysician *thinks* they confirm. But not only does Carnap's hastiness prevent him from discerning the value of meta-

<sup>31</sup> On the importance of analogy to the metaphysician, see D. M. Emmet, *The Use of Analogy in Metaphysics* (Proc. Ar. Soc., 1940-1), especially for her criticism of the notion of an *analogia entis*; and M. Macdonald, *The Philosopher's Use of Analogy* (Proc. Ar. Soc., 1937-8). For a criticism of one of the best known of analogical arguments, see Anderson, *Design* (this Journal, Dec., 1935).

<sup>32</sup> The *locus classicus* of such arguments is Plato's *Parmenides*. It is not surprising that rationalists like A. E. Taylor have sought to regard that dialogue as a *jeu d'esprit*, so fatal are its methods to any sort of rationalism.

<sup>33</sup> *Philosophical Perplexities* (Proc. Ar. Soc., 1936-7).

physics; it also prevents him, so we have argued, from seeing what exactly is involved in the criticism of metaphysics, from what sort of a philosophical position that criticism must flow. It is not altogether surprising, therefore, to find him falling back, in the end, on an empiricism by convention.

"It seems to me", he writes, "that it is preferable to formulate the principle of empiricism not in the form of an assertion—'all knowledge is empirical' or 'all synthetic propositions that we can know are based on (or connected with) experiences' or the like—but rather in the form of a proposal or requirement. As empiricists, we require the language of science to be restricted in a certain way; we require that descriptive predicates and hence synthetic sentences are not to be admitted unless they have some connections with possible experiences."<sup>4</sup>

Thus the metaphysician has only to announce that he has no desire to be accounted an empiricist, and the positivist will cease to castigate him. The "principle of tolerance" has replaced the rigorous tests of meaning which characterised the earlier doctrines of positivism. Now, a thoroughly worked out empiricism would insist that it is no "restriction" to demand that language have "some connection with possible experiences", that language which has no such connection is without sense, is, in fact, not language of all. But, because he fails to develop a theory of "possible experiences" (and to do so he would have to cease talking about "experiences" and start talking about *things*), Carnap is obliged to regard empiricism as a mere set of conventions about language. The "principle of verifiability" is an attempt to avoid philosophy; but philosophy has, in the end, its revenge.

The suggestion that language which has no "connection with experience" is not language at all has some affiliations with a theory prominent in the writings of Schlick, namely, that philosophy is what he calls "bad grammar". He is

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<sup>4</sup> *Testability and Meaning*, II (Philos. of Science, Vol. 4, No. 1). Carnap's "Off with his head!" turns out to be as harmless as that of the Queen of Hearts—and it is equally indiscriminating.

following closely the argument of the *Tractatus*. "Most propositions and questions", writes Wittgenstein, "that have been written about philosophical matters are not false, but senseless. We cannot, therefore, answer questions of this kind at all, but only state their senselessness. Most questions and propositions of the philosophers result from the fact that we do not understand the logic of our language" (4.003). The "logic of our language" is what Schlick calls grammar. "The meaning of a word is determined by a set of rules which regulate their use and which we may call the rules of their grammar" (p. 340). To say that metaphysics is ungrammatical,<sup>35</sup> therefore, is to say that it uses words in a way contrary to their "proper" use; or, alternatively, without assigning a use to them.

This reference to a word's "grammar" or "logic" suggests that "scholasticism" to which Ramsey objected ("The chief danger to our philosophy, apart from laziness and woolliness, is scholasticism, the essence of which is treating what is vague as if it were precise") and which is even more prominent in Russell's view that "a logically perfect language has rules of syntax which prevent nonsense".<sup>36</sup> For not only is it the case, as Wittgenstein recognises, that we ordinarily use words without laying down such "rules"; but if we did try to lay down rules which would prevent nonsense, we would at the same time hinder enquiry. (Just as the rationalistic "rules for the prevention of error" also make *discovery* impossible.)

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<sup>35</sup> Schlick considers that this criticism is simply a restatement of the verifiability rule in terms of "sentences" (i.e. sets of words). "Stating the meaning of a sentence amounts to stating the rules according to which the sentence is to be used, and this is the same as stating the way in which it can be verified (or falsified) . . . The meaning of a proposition is the method of its verification" (l.c.). But this is to suggest that an "ungrammatical" sentence refers to a proposition which cannot be verified; whereas it should be said that it *does not refer to a proposition at all*, and this is just why it has no meaning. Here is, in fact, another reason for objecting to the principle of verifiability—that it suggests that there are nonsensical *propositions* (as distinct from nonsensical sets of words). Schlick's adherence in this late article to the principle can only be regarded as a "cultural lag", for he is clear enough at other times that "we cannot inquire after the meaning of a proposition" (p. 339).

<sup>36</sup> For Ramsey, see *Foundations* (p. 269); for Russell, Introduction to the *Tractatus* (p. 8).



If we formulate the rule that the word "p" shall only be used in such a way that q, r and s are called "p", then we make it impossible to call t a "p" even if the qualities shared by q, r and s are also possessed by t. And if we say that "p" shall only refer to such things as are x, y, and z, then we prevent that analogical use of language (some of the analysts call it "metaphor") which, however much it may lead us astray, is the only way we have of drawing attention to resemblances on which we may be the first to insist. The freedom to talk nonsense is the price we pay for the flexibility of language; more generally, and along with error, it is the price we pay for the freedom to speculate. (That Wisdom, in his *Philosophical Perplexities*, should insist on a point of this sort may lead us to hope that the attraction of "scholasticism" is wearing thin.)

Granted the flexibility of language, granted that linguistic usage is never rigidly formalised (so that the comparison<sup>87</sup> with "grammar" is misleading), it is still possible to criticise metaphysical assertions as meaningless on the ground that on no ordinary interpretation of the words the metaphysician employs can we understand to what facts he is drawing attention. Thus Schlick maintains, in his *Unanswerable Questions* (p. 374), that if "What is the nature of time?" appears to be an unanswerable question, that is only because it is impossible to make out what is being asked, what is meant by the words "the nature of time". This, then, is not a real problem, but a pseudo-problem. It calls not for solution, but for *dissolution*, as Wittgenstein<sup>88</sup> puts it. Or take the question, "What is the meaning of life?" There is no ordinary sense of the word "meaning", it might be argued, in which it is intelligible to speak of "the meaning of life".

Consider how the metaphysician might reply to this objection. He might say:

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<sup>87</sup> A comparison, by the way, which can only be made because language has that very flexibility which is being condemned.

<sup>88</sup> According to Wisdom, *Metaphysics and Verification* (Mind, Oct., 1938).

1. There is a quite ordinary sense of the word "meaning" in which it signifies "value". I am asking, then, "What things are valuable?"

2. I am using the word "meaning" to signify "necessary conditions of".

3. We do not, I admit, ordinarily talk of the meaning of any but separate actions ("What is the meaning of this?") but if separate human actions have a meaning, then the total of such actions ("life") must also have a meaning.

In order, then, to convict a metaphysician of talking nonsense, we shall need to be thoroughly acquainted with ordinary usage, we shall need to be quite certain that he is not introducing a novel usage, and finally we shall have specific arguments to contest. Only if the metaphysician cannot succeed in reformulating his questions and assertions in a way in which they admit of discussion can we sustain the charge of meaninglessness; and in order to *show* that they do not admit of discussion we must ourselves develop a philosophical theory (must argue, for example, that there is no such thing as "the total of human actions"). And we should ourselves assist in that reformulation in order, first, that we may not overlook valuable discussions merely because they are metaphysically presented and, secondly, that we may be able to refute as false\* whatever admits of such refutation. We may find that no discussable reformulation is possible—if so, we can cry "Nonsense"—but "a short way with metaphysicians" is a hindrance, not a help, to the development of an empirical theory.

"But what", the positivist might reply, "could be meant by a 'discussable reformulation'? All this can mean is that you will try to persuade the metaphysician to *substitute* an empirical proposition for his metaphysics. If you succeed, no doubt you can then set about refuting his empirical proposition; but this does nothing to show that his metaphysics

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\* Such reformulations will have an intelligible contradictory. An important feature of the positivist criticism of metaphysics is the insistence that the "contradictories" of meaningless "assertions" are also meaningless.

is anything but nonsense; and it is a strange way of talking to call this new empirical proposition a 'reformulation' of metaphysics." This is a serious objection; it will not usually be possible to persuade the metaphysician that any empirical proposition is what "he really meant to say". But to convey his meaning at all, the metaphysician has to make some reference to facts, and it is by seizing hold of these references that metaphysics can be discussed and its incoherence revealed. For example, Socrates maintained that there is only one form of each sort and that of each form nothing can be said except that it is of that sort; it can then be shown that these doctrines are incompatible with the view that particulars participate in or imitate the forms. Or again, when anyone speaks of "the Creator of all things" it can be pointed out that creation always involves the use of materials, and hence the existence of something which the creator does not create. It is only if to criticisms of this sort the metaphysician replies "the sort of imitation I have in mind doesn't imply that the image resembles what is imitated" or "the sort of creation I am thinking of doesn't involve the use of materials" and goes on to explain that there is no way of indicating what the difference is because it is a "transcendental difference", that we are reduced to accusing him of saying nothing at all.<sup>40</sup> While he is prepared to recognise the implications of his empirical descriptions, argument with him remains possible. And when we refute his metaphysical assertions, what we are doing is to deny that these various descriptions can characterise the same thing (that the same thing can be both without materials and a creator, for example); or, leaving out all reference to the supposed entity, that what is of a certain description can ever be of some other description. It is by this means that we are able to refute metaphysical assertions without making use of other metaphysical assertions; by making use, instead, of empirical propositions the truth of

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. Anderson, *Realism and Some of Its Critics* (this Journal, June, 1930, p. 126) and Berkeley's criticism of the metaphor of "supporting" (*Principles*, §16).



which is necessarily implied in the descriptions the metaphysician offers of his supra-empirical entities. Thus we avoid the objection that in refuting metaphysics, we are ourselves contemplating the character and consequences of "metaphysical existence".

If metaphysical assertions have no content, the question naturally arises why their emptiness so often passes unnoticed. And the positivist maintains that while such assertions have no *representative* content, they have an *expressive* content. According to the positivist manifesto, *Wissenschaftliche Weltauffassung der Wiener Kreis*, metaphysical assertions "say nothing at all but are merely expressions of life-feelings".<sup>4</sup> Carnap compares them to lyric poems except that "they express not so much temporary feelings as permanent emotional or volitional dispositions". And he goes on to explain that "Realism is often a symptom of the type of constitution called by the psychologists extraverted, which is characterised by easily forming connections with men and things; Idealism, of an opposite constitution, the so-called introverted type, which has a tendency to withdraw from the unfriendly world and to live within its own thoughts and fancies" (P.L.S., p. 30).

Ayer has pointed out that this criticism does an injustice to the lyric poet, whose assertions are usually perfectly sensible. But, furthermore, it is only because the statements the poet puts before us have sense that we can infer from them the sort of feelings which he is trying to present to us. Similarly, if we can make inferences of the kind Carnap suggests from metaphysical assertions to "permanent dispositions" (cf. William James on "tender-minded" and "tough-minded" philosophies), that is because these assertions have some empirical content. If the dream had no manifest content, we could never discover its latent content, the wishes that

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<sup>4</sup> Quoted by J. B. Pratt, *Logical Positivism and Professor Lewis* (Jnl. of Philos., Dec. 20, 1934). This doctrine is not peculiar to the logical positivists. Destutt de Tracy, for example, wrote of metaphysics that "nous la rangerons au nombre des arts d'imagination, destinés à nous satisfaire, et non à nous instruire" (*Projet d'éléments d'idéologie*, 1801, as quoted by A. Koch in *The Philosophy of Thomas Jefferson*, p. 67).

gave birth to it. Thus once more it is important to insist that the metaphysician cannot "cut all connection between his propositions and experience"; it is that fact which makes possible not only the refutation but the understanding of metaphysics. But it is still more important to insist that we must first show that metaphysics is an illusion before we have the right to consider its genesis.

All in all, it is not surprising that the metaphysician has usually felt that his withers were unwrung by positivist criticism. It is easy, in Ewing's manner, to draw attention to the internal incoherence of positivist criticism; to emphasise, with innumerable critics, the subjectivism which it has never succeeded entirely in evading and which is so notorious a feature of earlier positivist writings and so clearly at variance with its claim to speak for "science"; and not at all hard to discern the "scholasticism" to which Ramsey drew attention or to see that the "metaphysician" the positivists criticise is only a figment of neo-Kantian nightmares. Positivism, to put it generally, is too clearly itself a metaphysics to cause much metaphysical soul-searching. Yet the criticisms of metaphysics as "trying to present content", as unverifiable, as "bad grammar", are not without their value. What is, however, lacking — so I have argued — is any thorough criticism of "content" philosophies, any demonstration that metaphysics *must* be non-verifiable, or that the metaphysician is *forced* into talking bad grammar. And such criticism, so I have maintained, can only proceed from a *theory of facts*.

To put it differently, the positivist criticism of metaphysics is not conclusive, but only preliminary. To accuse the metaphysician of talking nonsense should properly be regarded only as a rather impolite way of asking for further information. No doubt, it is something to discover that we *need* this information, that metaphysical assertions, as they stand, contain expressions the meaning of which is not at all clear; no doubt, again, it is often when we ask ourselves "How would we *show* that there is such a thing as matter?" or "How would we *confirm* the assertion that Providence works

mysteriously?"—and so far the principle of verifiability has its importance—that we discover ourselves to be not at all clear what is *meant* by "matter" or by "Providence". But the metaphysician will usually be prepared to help us out; he will explain that by matter he means "what supports qualities" and that he can show there is such a thing by demonstrating that qualities cannot support themselves, or, again, that we can confirm the assertion that "Providence works mysteriously" by observing that human actions often have quite unexpected consequences. It is at this stage that the criticism of metaphysics really begins. In the second case, it might take the form of maintaining that either this "confirmation" is really *all that is meant* by "Providence works mysteriously" (which then turns out to be an empirical statement); or, alternatively, in the manner of Hume and Berkeley, that unless we have direct acquaintance with Providence, we have no way of telling that if there were such a thing as Providence, human actions would have unexpected consequences. (This is the sort of difficulty "revelation" tries to meet, but at the cost of secularising the transcendent.) But it must end in a direct criticism of the very possibility of the intervention by a super-empirical being in the flow of events; just as the criticism of "matter" must end in a positive theory of facts, of "things" and their "qualities".

But to proceed in this way, to attempt not merely to *reject* but to *refute* metaphysics, is to assume that it is possible to work out a theory of facts. This the positivist would contest. With how much success, will be our main concern in the next of these articles.

(*To be continued.*)

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## THE STATUS OF INSTINCT.

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By W. M. O'NEIL.

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AT the beginning of the century, almost any form of behaviour which attracted attention or appeared to call for explanation might be attributed to an instinct. This offhand dubbing anything and everything instinctive now appears to be psychologically out of court. In America especially, there has been a widespread abandonment of both the term and the notion as so much mythological lumber. Those who do make use of the term, do so in an apologetic and vague way. They disclaim any intention of implying what used to be implied, but do not specify exactly what is implied. In England, some theory of instinct is ordinarily adopted, but again most commonly with a disclaimer of older connotations.

The attempts of some twenty years ago to settle the meaning of the term have been shelved rather than brought to any finality. Consequently it appears desirable to examine the present status of the notion, not so much as it is employed in current texts, but as it stands in the light of relevant observational data. There are three major lines of evidence, drawn from animal studies, clinical work and sociological studies respectively. This paper will be confined to the first, not because I regard animal studies as more valuable than direct human observations, but because on this issue it is less ambiguous, partly because controls are more easily established and partly because cultural influences are less complex. There is another good reason for examining the notion of instinct in terms of recent animal investigations. Its use in the explanation of human behaviour was borrowed from the naturalists who employed it to account for animal behaviour.

It was first applied to animal activities such as nest-building, mating and migration, which seemed to occur spon-

taneously and immediately in specific forms independently of any learning or exercise of intelligence and yet with such appropriateness to the situations in which they occurred as to imply a good deal of forethought and practice. The notion was elaborated and extended to include any widespread activity that might superficially appear to arise without direct practice or forethought. At a later stage, any activity which was widespread and appeared to have a deep source of motivation was termed instinctive. The alleged religious instinct is an example of this usage, which ignored the obvious training and contemplation behind religious behaviour.

In early works on the theory of instinct, three characteristics were emphasised: first, the invariability, almost automatism, of instinctive activity; second, a degree of appropriateness to the demands of the situation which approached perfection; and third, the immediacy of instinctive activity as contrasted with the fumbling trial-and-error of learning and the slowness of reasoned behaviour. The second and third characteristics led to lyrical discussions of the wonders and mysteries of instinct. The alleged invariability came to be contrasted with intelligent behaviour manifesting subtle and discriminative variation to meet the variation in the situations evoking it. This contrast, however, implied that instinctive behaviour was not always appropriate, especially in 'unnatural' situations. This conclusion was supported by the poignant anecdote of the fledgling which fell from its nest to be suspended by its leg in a forked bough. The mother bird instinctively responded to its cries by feeding it instead of disentangling it. There is here a clear contradiction of ineluctable appropriateness without forethought and practice.

Quite early observations of wasps by the Peckhams<sup>(10)</sup> cast doubt upon the then current view of instinctive inflexibility. Solitary wasps that sting caterpillars to paralyse them for storage purposes, were found to sting their victims in no uniform way nor always in a completely effective way. More recently McDougall<sup>(11)</sup> has pointed out that the nest building

of wasps showed distinct discrimination of variation in the immediate environment in which they were working; for example, a wasp building on a vertical wire built a nest very different from that built in the upper corner of a room. Another example from the Peckhams bears on the alleged contrast between instinct and intelligence. Solitary wasps of one species complete their nests by blocking up the entrance with a piece of earth or other small object. In one case the wasp tried to drag a withered leaf to the nest but as its stem caught in the ground she abandoned it. She next tried a stone but this was too heavy for her, so she turned to a lump of earth which for no discernible reason was also rejected. Finally, she located another leaf and used it to close the entrance. This manifests anything but invariability, and the variations can scarcely be deemed chance variations, but indicate, as Stout<sup>(18)</sup> comments, "persistence with varied efforts", the variation being determined apparently by the organism's comprehension of the situation it has to grapple with.

That instinctive behaviour appears in its complete and final form, whether appropriate or not, has also been definitely discounted. Pecking in chickens and the singing of certain birds have always been regarded as instinctive. Yet it has been shown by Shepherd and Breed,<sup>(19)</sup> Bird,<sup>(20)</sup> Scott,<sup>(12)</sup> and Conradi<sup>(6)</sup> that these activities do not first appear in their developed form. Newly hatched chickens will spontaneously commence to peck at small objects, but they do not in the first instance peck with any degree of skill nor with any marked degree of success in feeding themselves. Again, although certain species of birds do spontaneously commence to sing at a definite stage in their development, they learn to sing in the way that is supposed to be characteristic of them. That is, although they spontaneously peck and sing without practice or tuition, they have to learn how to peck with success and how to sing in a given way. In the case of pecking, the increase in skill did not appear to be entirely due to learning, but to the development of the bodily, especially the neural,



structure through maturation. In the case of singing, the structure of the vocal mechanism laid down definite limitations and possibilities in the manner of singing that was required. For example, although a canary reared with sparrows does not sing like a canary reared with his fellows, his song is sweeter and more elaborate but of the same sort as the sparrows', and although a sparrow reared with canaries does not sing like a sparrow reared with his fellows, his song is not as sweet or as fluent but is of the same sort as the canaries'.

From these cases, it seems necessary to make a distinction between the organism's being moved to do something or to achieve a certain result (motivation) and the actual skill in carrying out the action or bringing about the result. This distinction is implicit in many early theories, in that certain of them treat 'instinct' as an inherited piece of behaviour, whereas others treat it as an inherited force or energy moving the organism or enabling it to reach certain ends; that is, some theories are predominantly descriptive of what takes place, whereas others are predominantly explanatory. The distinction appears to be behind the difference in approach to the topic of the behaviourist and hormic theorists.

One current view of instinct, held especially by those whose approach to the topic is biological rather than psychological, would be opposed to this distinction, contending as it does that instinct is the ability to act in certain ways. This view is favoured by the behaviouristically inclined, and is found even in Lloyd Morgan's treatment. Instinct to them is a form of behaviour appearing spontaneously (i.e., immediately, unlearned and unpremeditated) and enabling the organism to meet certain situations it would not be able to meet were it not so endowed. They see in the problem of instinct a question of accounting for the organism's being able to do something rather than of accounting for its attempting to do it. Evidence, however, has always been adduced to show that instinctive behaviour does not always fully meet the situation, so that the more urgent problem

would seem to be to ascertain why the organism tries, as it apparently does, to meet such situations. Then would emerge the second problem, of ascertaining how the organism can in some instances actually meet the situations it wants to, even in the absence of relevant practice or tuition, and in others make fairly though not entirely successful attempts to do so.

The instances given above of behaviour commonly held to be instinctive, turning out to be dependent upon some form of learning for development, were disquieting for those instinctivists who failed to distinguish between motive and skill, who treated conation and action as identical. So disconcerting were such observations that many of the behaviourists, whose emphasis was naturally on the question of innate skills, came to reject the whole theory of instincts. A resort to pre-natal learning was made to account for behaviour appearing in the new-born before any opportunity for post-natal learning occurred. There does seem to be a definite possibility of pre-natal learning, although according to evidence on pre-natal behavioural development at present available, the extent of such learning would appear to be very limited (cf. 4). In view of this attempt, however, it is necessary to substantiate the case that there are pieces of behaviour determined primarily by hereditary factors.

Some evidence on this has been brought forward by Avery<sup>w</sup> in a careful investigation of guinea-pigs from the fortieth day of gestation. By the end of the usual sixty-eight day term, the foetus is highly developed—the new-born guinea-pig is sensitive to most sensory stimuli, it can stand and crawl, and when placed on its side can turn over on to its feet, it shows fear, responds socially to the presence of others of its kind and can vocalise. Many of these activities occur even when the foetus is pre-delivered. For example, an artificially delivered 63-day-old foetus can stand, walk and orientate itself to the ground by rolling over on to its feet no matter how placed on the floor. To ascertain whether this gravitational orientation occurred spontaneously at birth or whether it was pre-natally acquired, Avery took radiographic

pictures of foetuses *in utero* from the sixty-third day. He found that although the foetus did change its position and posture, it did not do so in relation to its mother's orientation to the ground, i.e., it showed no indication of any gravitational orientation, yet when delivered a few minutes afterwards it would roll over on to its feet when placed in any other position. Nor was there any evidence of pre-natal acquisition of skill in standing up and walking through practice, except in so far as limited movements *in utero* might contribute to these skills, which also appeared in sixty-three day old pre-delivered foetuses.

These and other observations reported by Carmichael<sup>(4)(5)</sup> and Stone<sup>(6)</sup> on the maturation of skills in the absence of relevant practice, suggest an innate determination of certain impulses to action and of a measure of skill in acting successfully. An increase in the efficiency of such action through practice and the exercise of intelligence is, of course, not precluded.

However, behaviour which is predominantly conditioned by the inherited constitution of the organism cannot be confined to that appearing immediately after birth. Some skills appear to develop some time after birth not through practice or instruction, but through the natural development of the organism, or as it is termed, the process of maturation. Tilney and Casamajor,<sup>(7)</sup> for example, found that kittens almost invariably raised themselves on their hind quarters at a uniform age and almost independently of the amount of practice. Prior to this age they were able only to sprawl out on their bellies with hind legs flattened outwards on the floor and used for locomotion more in the manner of oars than legs. From an examination of the nervous system at various ages in the kitten, they found that the myelinisation of relevant nerve fibres in the medulla was concurrent with the appearance of the ability to support body weight on the hind legs. It is interesting to note that the replacement of the Babinski reflex by the adult plantar reflex in the human infant is attributed to the myelinisation of the pyramidal tract.



A very early experiment by Spalding<sup>60</sup> presents another example of post-natal maturation. Wishing to determine whether the flying of swallows was innate or acquired, he locked up some newly hatched birds in visual and tactual isolation in cages so small that they could not stretch their wings. When released at the normal time of flying, some flew without assistance. However, the well-known fact that incubator-hatched chickens must be assisted in developing the habit (or instinct) of roosting, indicates that such experiments as Spalding's must not be interpreted to demonstrate innate determination of behaviour other than the specific form observed.

Another clear illustration of maturation is provided by Carmichael<sup>61</sup> in his experiments with embryonic salamanders. Coghill in previous investigations had traced a continuous series of developments in the swimming movements of the embryonic salamander. These developments did not take place by a process of accretive or additive growth generally postulated by the reflexological behaviourists, but by a process of differentiation within relatively simple movements. For example, in the first stage of swimming, progression was made by a crescent-shaped flexing of head and tail ends towards the same side. This movement later developed into an s-shaped flexing of head to one side and tail to the other. This change-over was found to occur at a uniform stage in the development of the organism. Carmichael wished to determine whether it resulted through practice or maturation. He took a batch of embryos in the pre-motile stage and divided them into two groups. One he placed in ordinary water, a congenial medium, and the other in a mild solution of chloretone, sufficiently concentrated to anæsthetise the organisms without arresting their growth. When the first group had made the change-over in swimming movements, the second were transferred from their special environment to plain water. They commenced swimming in the more complex way after an interval which it was assumed to be necessary for the narcosis to wear off.

Several further observations support the hereditary determination of skills. Two refer to peculiar locomotor activities. One is the curious spinning movement of waltzing mice, which is unlearned by the waltzing strain and which cannot be learned by non-waltzing strain. The other is pacing in horses. All horses can trot, but only the pacing strain can pace and they do so spontaneously. Trotting involves a diagonal symmetry in leg movement, that is, the near fore-leg and the far hind-leg are forward and the far fore-leg and near hind-leg are back, whereas pacing involves a parallel symmetry, the near fore- and hind-legs being forward and the far fore- and hind-legs back. A related activity is reported by Stockard<sup>(15)</sup> who observed basset hound hybrids reared by their German shepherd mother. With no prior association with bassets, they 'scented' with their noses down, barking as they ran, when first out in the field. The activity is characteristically basset and is completely foreign to the shepherd dog.

There is also evidence upon the post-natal appearance of impulses to action which may be attributed to constitutional maturation. For example, Yerkes and Bloomfield<sup>(21)</sup> found that up till about the eighth week, kittens placed singly with a mouse paid no attention to it, but at about that time, they would immediately show a keen interest, pounce on it as soon as it moved and would often kill and partially eat it. Stone<sup>(16)</sup> has made extensive investigations of the maturation of sexual behaviour in rats. He found that female rats reared in complete isolation were behaviourally receptive at the *oestrus* when placed for the first time with a sexually aroused male. Likewise, males reared in complete isolation, when placed with a female during *oestrus* immediately attempted copulation. It is significant to note that their first attempts were not made in a uniform manner nor were they always successful. Further, although there was a general similarity in the young rats' behaviour, it was quite different in many details from the more elaborate, almost ritualistic behaviour of the more experienced adult male. Here again we observe the distinction

between the impulse to attain a certain end state-of-affairs and the necessary activity (or skill) to bring it about.

Stone also observed that although the impulse to copulate will arise at puberty through the constitutional development of the rat, it also is considerably influenced by the animal's experience. In ordinary social conditions, the male rat approaching puberty will often attempt copulation before spermatozoa are liberated in the tubules of the testes and even before the penis is sufficiently developed to effect penetration.

Stone also observed that homosexual activity appeared spontaneously amongst both male and female rats when reared in isolation from members of the opposite sex. That is, in the absence of what is biologically the appropriate object, the activities may be directed upon some other object. Analogous transference to other sexual objects is reported by Whitman<sup>(20)</sup> and Craig.<sup>(7)</sup> Whitman reared male ring-doves with carrier-pigeons and in isolation from other ring-doves. Upon reaching maturity they mated only with pigeons, even though given access to females of their own species. Craig reports the behaviour of a male dove reared in visual and tactual isolation from other birds of any kind. On reaching maturity it attempted copulation with the experimenter's hand thrust into the cage. This was the only animate object it had ever encountered. Keepers of both domesticated and wild animals have frequently noted that males kept in solitary confinement for long periods exhibit sexual behaviour which can best be termed masturbatory. Prior heterosexual experience has occurred in many such cases, however.

Reviewing the foregoing evidence on sexual behaviour, we find a sufficient demonstration of innate determination to justify the use of the term instinct, but it must be noted that it is not necessarily accompanied by a fully fledged innate skill, that its time of appearance is partly conditioned by maturational factors and partly by environmental conditions, and that the object upon which it seeks gratification may vary with the circumstances in which it arises. It also serves to reinforce the distinction between the impulse and the activity



required for its gratification as well as leading to a further distinction between the impulse and the activity on the one hand and the object to which these are directed on the other. It also discounts the behaviourist view that instinctive behaviour is an innately determined reaction to given stimulation. Rather it would seem that instinctive behaviour arises from within the organism and the situation in which it occurs merely provides a field for its operation. The organism is not reacting to the situation so much as acting upon it.

Stone's studies give an even more marked instance of an instinct taking on a new form when the more usual mode of activity is prevented for lack of an appropriate field of operation. Not only did male rats reared apart from females manifest masculine sexual activity towards one another, but several of them when so approached would adopt the female receptive crouching posture. Exigencies of the experiment prevented further investigation on these lines, but Stone was inclined to attribute it to the glandular constitution of the males concerned. In passing, it may be noted that similar adoption of the female receptive posture is reported by Hamilton<sup>(6)</sup> and Bingham<sup>(7)</sup> in apes. Here, however, it frequently occurred when two males were quarrelling and was adopted by the one being overcome, which suggests its use as a defensive device. Avery reported that active homosexual behaviour was manifested by about 10 per cent. of his female guinea-pigs, and as this occurred only during *oestrus*, he also was disposed to attribute it to the glandular constitution of the individuals in which it occurred. A somewhat analogous case is the appearance of nest-building behaviour in male rats into which ovarian tissue has been grafted (Stone). Incidentally, this evidence gives some support to the psycho-analytic doctrine of dual sexual psychological constitution, and illustrates the mechanism of displacement of a motive from what might be regarded as its natural object to another.

Some evidence is available on the ways in which glandular functioning affects instinctive behaviour, but many issues remain unsettled. Evans has shown that the first

appearance of receptivity in female rats can be advanced, delayed or even completely eliminated by the control of nutrition, and Stone has established similar although not as conclusive experimental control of the appearance of sexual behaviour in male rats. This manipulation of diet seems to operate through the endocrine glands, a more direct manipulation of which also provides a means of control over the sex instinct. Subcutaneous injections and the removal of glandular tissue can completely alter sexual behaviour. Injections from mature animals can produce premature sexual awakening, and gonadectomy prior to puberty will usually prevent the appearance of either aggressive or receptive sexual behaviour in rats, apes and a variety of other animals. Post-pubescent gonadectomy will not necessarily eliminate sexual behaviour, however, although the impulse ordinarily wanes. Appropriate transplantation will normally restore sexual activity in both males and females.

However, the relationship between instinctive behaviour and glandular secretions into the blood stream is by no means clear. Whereas the grafting of ovarian tissue into the male rat gives rise to nesting and other maternal behaviour, its presence in the mature virginal female does not do so. Stone linked the blood stream of two mature females for one and a half years. During that period one bore three litters, whereas the other had no sexual experience either prior to or during the experiment. The former exhibited the normal nesting and maternal behaviour, whereas the latter gave no evidence of it and on the contrary was inclined to be hostile to any young rats coming her way. Obviously more than glandular secretions into the blood stream was involved in female maternal behaviour, yet strangely these seemed sufficient to produce similar behaviour in the male.

Thus we find what might be taken to be instinctive, so conditioned by practice, by imitation and by social instigation, so altered by displacement and so much involving intelligence, that the early naturalist view of instinct can no longer be

maintained. There would appear to be no evidence of invariability, of perfection upon first occurrence, of absence of learning either by the imitation of others or by practice, and of the absence of intelligent insight into the demands of the situation in which it occurs. Yet there is a sufficient innate determination of behaviour to justify a modern theory of instinct, although it may be sounder to abandon the term. The confusion that has grown up around it renders it difficult to use it without ambiguity. This does not, however, justify shelving the problem to which instinct theories were directed. The current American avoidance of the term is little more than such a shelving.

It is clear, however, that we must dispense with the view of instincts as inflexible forms of behaviour produced by the stimulation of innately established networks of neural connections. Even if the observed data were other than they are, Lashley's demonstration of the non-specificity of conduction paths would strongly press its being relinquished. Even the more reasonable view taken by McDougall of instincts as forms of behaviour or propensities for such behaviour which although subject to later changes through experience, are in the first instance wholly of innate determination, can scarcely be maintained.

In deciding where we can locate innate determination, it will be valuable to distinguish three features of allegedly instinctive behaviour. First, there is the impulse or movement towards some objective or end state-of-affairs. Second, there is the object with which this impulse may be associated. Third, there is the actual activity through which the objective is attained.

Taking the last of these first, some evidence has already been adduced to show that in particular cases a skill or specific sequence of activity may be inherited. However, in other cases of instinctive behaviour, there seems little evidence of such innate skill. Our purpose here is not, of course, to make a decision about each particular instinct, just as it is



not our intention to determine how many instincts there are or to characterise them. The issue is being discussed in general terms. Apart from some instances, it seems clear that few instincts, certainly in higher organisms, incorporate such innate skills as enable the organism adequately to meet suddenly occurring situations without prior experience in that situation, without tuition in how to meet it and without any intelligent comprehension of its nature and demands. Certainly most skills connected with the so-called major instincts (i.e. excluding reflexes and tropisms, which may be solely skills in the sense that the term has been used here) are largely built up by learning and intelligent insight into what is required if the organism is to attain certain objectives. Where there is a skill or for that matter a preference for one rather than another possible mode of activity existent prior to any experience, it would seem possible to give some account of it in the following ways. Many action preferences arise directly from anatomical peculiarities of the organism. That birds fly from danger, sheep run from it and monkeys climb out of it would seem to be merely a more blatant example of this. Again, the action preference may arise from the organism's insight into the features and requirements of the situation. This is similar to the Gestalt theorist's account of instinct; that is, the organism perceives the situation as one requiring a particular meeting of it and the action results as a closure of the incomplete configuration presented. The normal process of learning taking place under conditions of intense motivation, when added to the foregoing, will go far to explain skills associated with instincts, at least in the higher organisms. As far as man is concerned, there is little evidence to suggest the existence of innate skills associated specifically with particular 'instincts'. Exceptions are the skills of sucking and swallowing associated with food-getting and the startle reaction associated with simple sudden fears. There are, of course, other skills which are of predominantly innate determination but which are not linked to any particular instinct. The skills of locomotion are an example.

There is a stronger suggestion that the objects of many motives are innately determined at least in part. The strongest case can be made out for the sex motive in this respect. Freudian theory has indicated a very specific inherent attachment to objects, which undergoes a series of transformations through a maturational process. However, there does seem to be a greater contribution by social conditioning than Freud allowed for. The evidence presented here has shown that even in the case of animals the attachment of a motive to particular objects is not as firm as it was held to be by the traditional instinctivists. Although no evidence has been presented here there does appear to be some innate conditioning of food tastes. Katz<sup>(9)</sup> has summarised some of the data on this point. There is little, however, to indicate that there is any firm and specific inherent attachment to objects by such motives as fear, anger, curiosity, submission, and the like, which are not so closely tied to organic needs as are the motives of hunger and sex.

The strongest case for instinct can be made when we turn to the remaining feature of allegedly instinctive behaviour, namely, its impulsive character. Taken in this way, instinct implies a desire, not necessarily conscious of course, to bring about a certain state of affairs not because the organism has learned that such a condition is good, desirable or pleasant, nor because it has been taught that it is so, but because the organism as it is innately constituted needs it or will be left deficient if it is not brought about. A great variety of evidence has been presented here showing that the organism in certain situations does spontaneously and immediately strive to bring itself into some relationship with some item (object) of its environment or to alter the existing relationships between various items. This is not to say that experience and the situational demands (as they are taken by the organism) do not condition it in one way or another, either in time of appearance or in manner of operation. Again, when the organism cannot effect that relationship, the desire is sufficiently flexible to permit the substitution of some other relationship.

The organism does act in various ways which are primarily determined by the wants rising within it but which are modified by its comprehension of the situation in which it is acting, by its experience, by its contacts with its fellows and a variety of other conditions. The first problem to be faced is not whether this behaviour is innately given or not, but the question of the motivation of this behaviour—what motives activate the organism and how they are interrelated. Only then does the second problem arise, namely, what conditions determine the operation of these motives. The doctrine of instinct laid considerable stress upon the innate determination of motives, although in some forms it did not orientate itself to the motives but to the resultant activity. The evidence presented here indicates that although the doctrine may have erred in an over-attribution of significance to hereditary conditions, it has been wrongly discounted by those contemporaries who attribute the whole of behaviour to experience. It would appear that they have been able to do so by concentrating upon the weakest segment of the unclearly differentiated notion of instinct, that is upon innate skills, and by brushing aside the question of motivation in theorising upon behaviour. The doctrine of instinct had in many of its forms the virtue of emphasising just that question. Unfortunately, however, it was often taken to have solved the problem of motivation, whereas in fact a proper understanding of innate determination of motivation seems to wait upon a better understanding of what motivation is as distinct from the conditions under which it occurs and the behaviour resultant from it.

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## DISCUSSIONS.

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### I.

## THE MEANING OF GOOD.

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By ARTHUR N. PRIOR.

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MR. W. H. C. EDDY, in his article on "Ethics and Politics" in the *Journal* for September, 1944, may be considered to have established his main contention against Catlin that Ethics and Politics at least overlap, and that whatever formal problems attach to a scientific treatment of the former attach also to a scientific treatment of the latter. But he joins these conclusions with an acceptance (with a few minor emendations) of Professor Anderson's solution of these formal problems in his article on "The Meaning of Good" in the *Journal* for September, 1942; and Mr. Eddy's article is so worded that it is in effect a continuation or development of Professor Anderson's. I propose here to consider and criticise, not the points which I think Mr. Eddy successfully establishes against Catlin, but the point of view which he has in common with Professor Anderson.

Both these writers hold both that Ethics is properly called a science, and that sciences properly so called consist of descriptions and not of exhortations, policies or recipes, and they are consequently compelled to hold—and readily accept this consequence—that the predicates which are indispensable to Ethics are purely descriptive ones, and are in fact synonymous with a loosely-located group of other predicates which no one would claim to be anything *but* descriptive. It is, however, essential to their view, and indeed I think must be admitted whether one accepts the position just described or not, that there are in the world "competing moralities". One consequence of this is that ethical terms

are given different material exemplifications, and even different formal definitions, by the participants in different moral "movements". In some moralities authority and protection are "good"; in some, disinterestedness and enterprise; in some, again, "good" is already defined when it has been equated with the descriptive predicates of the things which are identified as "goods", while in others it has some other meaning, such as "the demanded", and only *happens to be* exemplified in the instances given. The feature of the theory of Professor Anderson and Mr. Eddy which I wish particularly to consider is that the descriptive predicates which they make synonymous with "good" are precisely those predicates which happen to be "demanded" in the morality which they espouse.

I do not think either would deny that this last is in fact the case, and it is demonstrable from other parts of their position. They both draw attention to the fact—and it certainly is a fact—that theorising in general, and ethical or ethico-political theorising in particular, are themselves activities and parts of a moral "movement". They enumerate the other activities which support that of disinterested theorising and the ones which hamper and oppose it. And they use the term "good" to describe precisely those activities which they consider themselves to be supporting, and count upon being supported by, when they are disinterestedly theorising (whatever "lapses" they may have when outside the bounds of their articles).

This choice is at least in part a linguistic one, and is admitted to be so by Professor Anderson. He states that if we admit with him that the "objectively desirable" is a contradictory conception, we are bound either to use moral predicates in a thoroughly "relational" sense and abandon all claims to a "scientific" character for our ethics, or to define them in such an unambiguously descriptive way that no one will imagine that we are exhorting, prescribing, or advocating any policy when we are using them. The alternative adopted by Professor Anderson himself, and by Mr. Eddy, is, of course, the second. It is not evident, however, that either



writer has carried through with this alternative consistently, or that it is possible to do so.

It is in some sense true that we are at liberty to use words exactly as we please; and if we are recommending linguistic innovations we may do so with a pious hope that if we use words in this way often enough the usage will "catch on". Language, however, is a social instrument and not a purely individual one, and it may save unnecessary misunderstandings if we attempt to weigh up beforehand the probable effect on our hearers of our talking in a particular way, in view of all the known associations of the word we are using, and also the probable remoter effects of our linguistic recommendation "catching on". Professor Anderson and Mr. Eddy are particularly bound to pay attention to these factors, as there are certain effects of language upon its hearers which are by their own morality illegitimate. It is, in particular, not in accordance with the professional ethics of the disinterested theorist to give his demands, or the demands of his movement, greater weight than they would otherwise have by suggesting that they are somehow also descriptions. That is precisely the form of "cheating" which Professor Anderson finds objectionable in Moore.

Now the use of the term "good" to signify "the demanded" is both time-honoured and widespread, however this tradition may be mingled with other and different ones, and the mere fact of describing, for example, disinterestedness as "good" is bound to suggest to the reader a demand that he be disinterested. He is also bound to be a little at a loss to know just what *other* reason Professor Anderson and his "movement" can have for identifying "the good" with those things which are considered desirable within this movement rather than those which are considered desirable in others. Professor Anderson might perhaps have saved himself from the suspicion of playing a very old trick upon us, if he had chosen instead to equate the word "good" with the predicates regarded as desirable by his adversaries, and applied it to such things as authority and protection, thus making it clear beyond doubt

that his use of it concealed no attempt whatever to exhort or advise us. Even this choice, however, like the one he has actually made, would be essentially arbitrary, except on the assumption that the primary meaning of "good" is "the desired", by *someone*.

The alternatives left to us are these: a frank adoption of the opposite alternative which Professor Anderson mentions, a consistently "relational" view of Ethics, and abandonment of its claim to be a science; or an abandonment of ethical language altogether in view of the trickery which it always invites (an alternative which for Professor Anderson would mean little more radical than according to the term "good" the same treatment as he is already prepared to accord to such terms as "obligatory"); or, thirdly, an adoption of the view that the contradictions attaching to the traditional ethical notion of the "objectively desirable" are due to inescapable deficiencies of all human language. The last suggestion, of course, particularly if the linguistic deficiencies concerned are attributed to "original sin", and if the notion of "intrinsic mandatoriness" is taken to involve the existence of a Commander, transfers the whole subject to the realm of theology. There is another point also at which this last possibility is suggested. Professor Anderson hints that his choice of synonyms for "good" may be cleared from the charge of arbitrariness by a re-statement of Kant's criterion of non-contradictoriness. "Goods" are activities which are self-supporting and self-promoting. Mr. Eddy similarly insists (he admits "somewhat dogmatically") that the spurious "goods" of the authoritarians are "divisive". Few would deny that theorising is promoted by co-operation and co-operation by truthfulness, but it is by no means so certain that truthfulness always assists its own continuance. At least sometimes it plays into the hands of the enemy, and it is conceivable that it might do so finally and fatally. This is, at all events, a matter for empirical determination, and it is one which we certainly cannot say has already been empirically determined, and we shall need to suspend judgment on Professor Ander-

son's linguistic recommendation for a very long time indeed if it really hangs on the decision of such points as these by empirical means. Kant appears to have held that they could be decided more rapidly, if less surely, by other means, and it is this belief, certainly not original to Kant, which seems to haunt even Professor Anderson and Mr. Eddy.

Those who wish to pursue this suggestion, however, will need to be extremely careful. They will expose themselves to particularly easy, obvious and just criticism if they begin by pointing triumphantly to the inconsistencies (such as those which I have pointed out here) in the systems of non-theological moralists, and go on to claim that these are removed by bringing God on to the scene. The very most that they can do is to suggest (they can do no more than suggest it) that these inconsistencies are symptomatic of an unconscious admission of the contradiction at the centre of their own position. The theological moralist may say in his own language that both the non-theological moralist's language and his own stand under God's judgment, and only make any sort of sense by His mercy. The only philosophical merit of this position lies in its frank admission of contradiction at the very outset; and it is, to say the least, a very doubtful one.

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## II.

### ETHICS AND ADVOCACY.

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By JOHN ANDERSON.

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IN replying ("The Nature of Ethics", this Journal, June, 1943) to Mr. A. D. Hope's discussion of my article, "The Meaning of Good", I suggested, though I did not expressly state, that the "normative" view of ethics would never be got rid of. I do not find it altogether surprising, then, that I myself should be accused of upholding "norms"—though I think it unfortunate that Mr. Prior should ignore so much of



the argument of my original article (giving a general impression, with no exact quotation) and should make no mention at all of the supplementary discussion, in which, incidentally, I denied the possibility of a consistent ethical theory of a "relational" kind. I hope, however, in this rejoinder, to be able to develop some fresh material without excessive citation of "what I actually said".

Little need be said about Prior's logic, which appears to be a doctrine of elementary predicates (perhaps even of concepts), the subjects of each of which are its "material exemplifications". The position, whatever it is, is simply assumed, and no comment is made on my contention, in "The Meaning of Good", that subjects and predicates are not distinct classes of terms—that, in particular, "goods" and "good" are the same term, and that Moore's denial of this is bound up with his relativism (his preceptualist view of good). There is, at any rate, nothing in my article to justify the assertion that I make good "synonymous" with a group of other predicates belonging to the things I call good. Even where, as in definition, a complex term XY is *coextensive* with the term A, I should certainly not call A and XY synonymous, since that would suggest, to say the least, that the relation was between words instead of between terms (sorts of things).

Linguistic, of course, is one of the main sources of contemporary confusion, operating, as it does, as a substitute at once for philosophy and for a real theory of language. In this connection, I did not admit in the article, and do not admit now, that my "choice" of a meaning for good "is at least in part a linguistic one". I certainly said that people of my way of thinking would have to explain their "usage", but, since I immediately went on to say that they would point out in terms of it the *errors* of other thinkers, it should have been clear that I was presenting the matter as a question of things and not of conventions. I mentioned, of course, the fact that economists and moralists use the same *word* with different meanings; and I should speak of a relativistic conception of good as a usage, in the sense that it combined incompatible

meanings. Thus a person who asserted that he was aware of that distinction and was avoiding that confusion might be said to be "explaining his usage", but he would not be "choosing" or "recommending" anything except concentration on something that *is* referred to in an existing usage, with excision of something else that does not really belong to it.

It does, of course, constantly happen that false beliefs and confused thinking affect usage, that a person who believes that X is Y when actually it is not, thinks he has *told us* that A is Y when he says it is X, or that this unwarranted conclusion is *conveyed* by that statement among a group of people who share the false belief (who "take for granted", as groups constantly do, what is not the case). But it does not follow that a person who recognises the incompatibility of X and Y should, when confronted with this "usage", decide to refrain from talking about X, or should conclude that the persons who have fallen into this confusion know nothing about X. What he can do instead is to try to disentangle the real subject (and the recognised truths about it) from the false accretions—and by so doing he may hope to open the way to fresh discoveries on the subject. That is the attitude I have taken up to the ethical views I have criticised, whereas Prior, it seems to me, has simply *assumed* that the subject as I see it does not exist (and that I could not have learned about that subject even from confused views). At any rate, his argument is weighted from the start in favour of a "relational" view (without adding anything to what I had said in analysis of that type of position) and the first two of the possibilities which, he considers, remain when arbitrariness is ruled out, amount to nothing more than that. As to his third possibility, it is not clear to me how recognition of "inescapable deficiencies of all human language" could lead in the direction of a theological view of the matter; if theology is any sort of doctrine and not just incantation, it, with all other doctrines, will be undermined by that recognition—which, however, is itself a doctrine. The third possibility, then, does not exist, even though some theologians may

be prepared to argue sophistically that contradictions don't matter, that they are merely a sign of the "imperfection" of our apprehension of ultimate reality.

It should be understood, of course, in connection with the question of "disentangling" that no thinker is suddenly confronted with this as a task—as who should say, "Ah, there is confusion here! Let me see how much that is positive will be left when I have removed it." His thinking has all the time been affected, on the one side, by the assumptions of his fellows and, on the other, by the impact of the facts (from which issues the commonplace that no two persons have exactly the same usages). And the serious student of ethics in particular will be concerned to get a coherent view of a certain objective field; only so can he be said to be studying (wrestling with problems) and not just memorising formulae dictated by his teachers. Now clearly, in doing so, he may make discoveries—he may find, e.g., that good has characters and relations other than, and even opposed to, those he had been told it had—but a new discovery does not constitute a new usage, and to pretend that it does (that a person who rejects previous views of good is really talking about a different thing) is simply to erect a barrier to discovery. It may be that most people treat the assertion "X is good" as a recommendation, but they do not treat it only as that, and so the possibility is not excluded of someone's finding out that it is not that at all, that the recommendation and the characterisation spring from different sources and that it is confused thinking to combine them, however widespread the confusion may be. But this discovery (as I take it to be) is conditioned by an interest in the subject and not by an abstract objection to relativism; it is interest in the subject that leads to the recognition of ethical relativism, not the recognition of relativism to the setting up of a new subject.

Prior gives a quite inaccurate account of what I "state" in this connection. I am not certain whether he takes me to be arguing that, having first discovered the amalgamation of quality and relation in notions like "the absolutely desirable"



or "intrinsic value", one is then faced with the choice of coming down on the relational or on the qualitative side. I admit that I have expressed myself in one passage ("The Meaning of Good", p. 132) in a way that lends itself to that misunderstanding. Also, as I explained in "The Nature of Ethics" (p. 28), I carelessly gave the impression, in that passage, that I consider it possible to take a consistently relational view of *ethics*—though, as I further explained, I think it quite possible to give a scientific account of relations (of demanding or whatever it may be). But I neither stated nor suggested that a qualitative treatment of moral "predicates" is one in which they are defined "in such an unambiguously descriptive way that no one will imagine that we are exhorting, prescribing, or advocating any policy when we are using them". As I said towards the end of the article (p. 139), while I recognise the scientific importance of definition, I do not consider that ethical terms (good, in particular) have to be defined before ethical science can proceed. But, whether an assertion is a definition or not, it can always be misunderstood; and, so far from attempting to rule out misunderstanding in the "alternative" I adopted, I said explicitly (p. 134) that "people simply will not be persuaded that, when we say 'X is good', we are not urging them to promote X or to exhibit activities of the character X". Presumably Prior was blind to this statement because it did not accord with the interpretation of my position he was otherwise led to give in terms of his own assumptions; that is just another illustration of the possible misunderstanding of any exposition of any subject. But I think I did something in the article to convey my view that the progress of ethics (as of any other science) consists of a growth of understanding in some people, and neither requires, nor can be expected to get, understanding from everyone—that there will always be people who attach a mandatory character to goodness, and who will have a poorer knowledge, on that account, of goods themselves.

I recognise, then, that when I say "X is good" some people will think I am urging them to promote X. But if I

were to confine myself to saying what could not be misunderstood, I should never say anything at all; and since, at the same time, I have maintained as emphatically as I could that it is a misunderstanding, I do not think that the effect of some of my statements on careless readers can be taken as showing that I am surreptitiously urging a particular policy on them. It is not, Prior says, "in accordance with the professional ethics of the disinterested theorist to give his demands, or the demands of his movement, greater weight than they would otherwise have by suggesting that they are somehow also descriptions". And he adds that this is precisely the form of "cheating" I objected to in Moore. But that is taking things the wrong way round; what I objected to was the suggestion that any description could of itself convey an *obligation* (or be imperative). I maintained, on the contrary, that any concrete characterisation would be an inducement only to some people, so that (p. 126) it "is more convenient, if there are objects one wishes above all to promote, dogmatically to call them good and let it be 'understood' that a certain obligatoriness attaches to them on that account". And when, in this way, the giving of a certain description to a thing is taken to be somehow also a direction to us to promote it, the effect, as I suggested (p. 128), is to make the description itself obscure and confused. The contention that good is the *proper* object of pursuit reduces either to the identity "good is good", the question of pursuit being irrelevant (cf. p. 124), or to the assertion of a *universal* object of pursuit, the question of its qualities being irrelevant. In maintaining that that assertion is false, that there is no universal object of pursuit and hence no description that is a universal recommendation, I have at least warned readers against any confidence-trick. But this leaves me free to maintain that there are descriptions which the admixture of recommendation confuses, and that they (more exactly, *things* of those kinds) are the concern of the science of ethics.

I said it would be necessary for the ethical theorist to show how these confusions arise and persist—and I offered at

least a partial explanation. But Prior, as I have remarked above, seems simply to assume that recommendation cannot be detached from assertions of goodness, that "good" is always a relative term, and thus that if anyone calls things good without qualification he is using "suggestion" on his hearers—what is suggested being that their objects are the same as his, when in fact specification (complete statement) might show that they are not. And on this basis—the linking of good with pursuit, and the recognition of *diversity* of pursuits—it must be denied that good is a descriptive term at all. (There is, of course, the view that the diversity is only superficial, that "rational" consideration of our aims will show that there is "ultimately" a single object, the good, which we are all pursuing. I consider that, on this view also, "good" is deprived of any definite content, and there are other objections to the philosophy of reconciliation—but for the present I shall take diversity of interests as admitted.) I have denied that it is possible to work out a consistently relational view of goodness; and, in that connection, it would be interesting to know what Prior means by saying that certain things are "considered desirable" by a person or in a movement. It would certainly be a curious way of saying that they are *desired*; but, if more than that is meant, there would be some difficulty in showing that a quality is not being covertly introduced.

Now Prior's contention is that I have covertly introduced a relation (supporting), since the things I call "good" are the things I support (or the things supported by "my" movement). This view depends on an interpretation of my conclusions, not on an examination of my argument, though, in attempting to show that it is false (that I do not support the things I call "good"), I shall try to bring out fresh points regarding the conception of "support". But first of all I want to say something about the special question of *inquiry*. Prior's suggestion that, to determine the various goods, I "enumerate the other activities which support that of disinterested theorising" is another piece of interpretation and is not justified by anything in my article. But certainly inquiry is the good which



I find myself most frequently taking as an example, and there may be special reasons for that choice. The question is, then, whether the inquirer who attributes goodness to inquiry does not thereby incur the suspicion of advocacy (of "boosting" his own activities), while he who takes the opposite view (who does not, at least, see any goodness in inquiry *as such*) escapes that imputation.

Clearly, some of the activities which the ethical theorist is concerned with will be activities in which he himself engages, and it would not be surprising if he had a special interest in the activity of inquiring; he might, then, have a tendency to bring it into a field to which it did not belong or to give it a prominence to which it was not entitled. And this might be regarded as a "moralist's fallacy", comparable to the "psychologist's fallacy" pointed out by William James—the inclination of the psychologist to believe that his knowledge of the agent's operations is possessed by the agent himself. Indeed, a confusion of the latter type is quite common in moral theory—the belief that, when the agent is "acting well", he *must know* that he is acting well, that no activity can be good unless it is *undertaken* as good or for the sake of its goodness. It may be said, no doubt, that the moralist's predisposition to this sort of view is not a sufficient reason for our rejecting it—there are solidier arguments against the notion of a "self-evaluating" activity. But, taking it to be a confused view, we cannot treat as a parallel case the attribution of an ethical character to inquiry in general. For, whatever the theorist's inclinations may be, he has raised an issue which must be discussed in its own terms and not in terms of his inclinations.

Once more, if it is *assumed* that there is no issue, no objective goodness but only preferences, the assertion that inquiry is good may be translated into the assertion that inquiry is "preferable" to non-inquiry, and this again may be understood as an attempt to "suggest" that inquiry holds the same place in all systems of preferences or "scales of values"—a suggestion whose effectiveness would depend, as I myself indicated (pp. 113, 4), on people's uncertainty about their

"values". The operation of a person's own preferences in the use of the confused notion of "the preferable" could then be studied as part of the subject-matter of a positive theory of preferences. But, if there is an issue, the fact that the theorist has interests which may distort his view of it has no place in the discussion of the issue itself; it is a condition of inquiry in general, and it is only *after* the acceptance of certain views of the subject as facts that evidence of any specific distortion can be given. Indeed, if the fact that it is an inquirer who holds the view were a reason for calling in question the attribution of an ethical character to inquiry, it would be a reason for questioning *any* view about inquiry—however, that is of minor importance compared with the point that, since interests are operative in all inquiry, any view at all could be discounted in this manner. Without setting any view above criticism, we can say that the general consideration that "we may be wrong" forms no part of the discussion of any specific assertion; so, in this special case, the connection which Prior supposes to exist between my inquiring interest and my views about inquiry has no place in a discussion of those views, though it is a question to which attention might be turned if it had been demonstrated independently that my views are false or confused.

The position is, then, that even if it were true that I *support* inquiry and the other things I regard as good, that would do nothing to show that my views are false or, again, that I cannot legitimately mean more by "good" than "supported by me". But what could be meant by saying that I support inquiry? If it were only that I *engage* in inquiry, then, since every student of ethics can be described as engaged in study, his view of the ethical character of study would be suspect since he "supports" it, and we should have to turn to non-students to get an unbiassed view! There is, in fact, no field of study whatever within which there are not *some* features of the inquirer's activity, but this sort of participation in a field is not ordinarily held to prejudice discussion—nor, again, is it commonly called "support". Yet I do not

think it can fairly be inferred from my article that I have any other relation to inquiry (apart from inquiring into *it*) than that of engaging in it. In particular, I cannot fairly be represented as setting up inquiry as an object of pursuit. Of course, we speak of "pursuing inquiries", but that merely means engaging in them, not having them as *ends*. At the conclusion of my discussion, "The Nature of Ethics", I spoke of "the ridiculous overworking of the conception of support" and depreciated the place of *choice* in human life; another way of putting the matter would be to say that a great many writers (particularly, moralists) speak as if the specifying and pursuing of ends (things to be brought about) were the outstanding feature of human conduct, instead of being an occasional and minor occurrence. (We quite often know what we are going to do, but that is quite different from *deciding* to do it.)

There is nothing paradoxical, then, in a statement by anyone engaged in inquiry that he does not take inquiry as an end. Having the habit of inquiring he may at certain times have the choice between different lines of inquiry and decide to follow one of them; but he did not form the habit by deciding to acquire it, and he exercises it, for the most part, without thinking about it at all—his thoughts being concentrated on his subject. And, apart from the particular case of inquiry, there is a general question to be raised regarding the treatment of habits or activities as ends—viz., what is it that chooses or pursues them? Surely, it could only be previously existing habits or activities. Prior speaks of things that we (Eddy and I) support; but what are "we"? Pure individuals, extensionless centres of force to which various pursuits become somehow attached? If it were true that we support inquiry and the rest, it would be some specific activity in us (perhaps, the inquiring activity itself) that did the supporting. But does inquiry, or does any other activity, pursue inquiry as an objective? Inquiry goes on—not as a matter of policy but as a matter of habit. As I have argued in earlier articles in this Journal (e.g., "Determinism and Ethics", December, 1928;

"Realism versus Relativism in Ethics", March, 1933), goods do not come about by being chosen; and anyone who confusedly takes them as ends will have very poor success in securing them. The main point is that, where choice takes place, it is activities that choose; and while it would be absurd to speak of inquiry choosing to inquire, there is no ground for treating it as the aim of any other activity—or as an object of "my" policy in particular.

I have said, of course, that goods support or assist one another, but this is a question not of policy (choice) but of causality. The activity of inquiry in one mind or group causes the continuance of that activity (or some other good activity) in another; by its natural operation it removes hindrances and provides materials. It might even be said to cause the activity to *spring up* in another mind or group, provided the capacity was there—though here it might be contended that unless the "capacity" existed as a spontaneous, even if comparatively undeveloped, activity, "communication" would not take place, that education can only be of the nascently inquiring. Now it is undeniable that inquirers can learn to expect the extension of inquiry under certain conditions, also that in the course of these communications certain "rules" (things to be remembered, things to be avoided, etc.) come to be formulated, and, further, that the existence and modes of operation of forces hostile to inquiry come to be recognised. But it is still inquiry that is the agent in all this, and, if it forms a policy, it is not itself the *object* of that policy; and, in particular, it will be weakened unless it sits loosely to its rules and, for the most part, forgets about them. This, I think, would be admitted by many with regard to education, and it should not be hard for these people to admit it with regard to cultural communication in general. Policy, as we may put it, has to play second fiddle to spontaneity, and goods continue because of their own character—and emphatically *not* because they are wanted. (I find it curious that Prior should describe this part of my position as "a re-statement of Kant's criterion of non-contradictoriness". I have acknowledged, in "Determinism and Ethics",



a certain connection between my view and that put forward by Socrates in *Republic I*. But whereas Kant is concerned with what can be *willed*, I am talking about how certain things actually go on. And while I say that evils are found opposing other evils, I see nothing "contradictory" in that situation. Prior's substitution of "truthfulness" for inquiry, in the same passage, is further indicative of his inability to avoid giving a preceptual twist to my views. The recognition of the goodness of inquiry is not the laying down of a rule, and inquiry could assist its own continuance even if truthfulness didn't. At the same time, it is conceivable that telling the truth to an enemy of inquiry—or is it an enemy of truthfulness?—would do no harm to the cause of inquiry in the long run, even if it was immediately fatal to the truth-teller. Socrates at his trial is a case in point.)

Prior's statement, then, that the things Eddy and I call "good" are those we consider ourselves to be supporting, and count upon being supported by, when we are disinterestedly theorising, is false because it brings in considerations of policy and pursuit where they do not belong (where I certainly do not "consider" they belong), and thus entirely misinterprets the contention that good activities, in or out of us, support one another. Even where there is a question of a policy of a movement (say, a scientific movement), the things aimed at are always externals, "useful" things (e.g., the provision of apparatus) and not things that could be described in the same terms as scientific activity itself—and, even so, the policy will be both temporary and elastic. Similarly, one might speak of persons engaged in common work as "supporting" one another, but that would not mean that they regarded one another as "good"—at least, in the same sense as that in which the work was good. At any rate, the way in which goods support one another is not the reason for their being called "good" and signifies nothing in the way of policy or recommendation. And this brings me to the final sense in which I might be said to support inquiry (or anything else I regard as good), viz. that I advocate it, that I try to induce people to engage in it. Such

advocacy Prior takes to be implicit, though unacknowledged, in my use of the term "good", and, if I can show that that is not so, I shall consider that I have drawn a definite line between the good and the supported.

How, then, I would ask, can one recommend inquiry; what inducement can be held out to people to engage in it? I could scarcely expect people to be moved by my statement that inquiry is good, if they took this to mean only that I *wanted* them to inquire. In order to be influenced in this direction they would have to think that inquiry carried with it something that *they* wanted. In other words, my advocacy would consist in bringing out a causal connection, which they had overlooked, between the activity of inquiry and some object of theirs, in showing the "usefulness" of inquiry to them. Now, if I persuaded them in this way that they should engage in inquiry, I should be doubly deceiving them—first, in that there is *no* object which is uniformly promoted by inquiry, no external thing to which it can be subordinated, and, secondly, in that people cannot become inquirers by simply wanting to, that the spirit of inquiry cannot be so induced. In fact, there is no inducement to inquiry; inquiry develops by the interplay of inquiring minds (including, as I said in connection with education, nascently inquiring minds) and in no other way. Believing this, I can say that I do not advise people to engage in inquiry or tell them that it will serve their purposes, and can trace the taking as recommendation of my assertion that inquiry is good to that obsession with ends (with "results" as contrasted with activities) which, as embodying false theory, I have also criticised. Inquiry spreads (as far as it does so) by its own natural operation, and taking its extension as an aim, *trying* to extend it, is a sign of weakness and confusion. Policies have force only within a "morality" or way of living, and not as between different ways of living. Of course, there is in society an intermingling of movements and moralities, and no person or movement is "given over" to goodness; but still it is the business of the

theorist to distinguish the divergent tendencies, not to run them all together.

It is obvious on the face of it that there can be no inducement to disinterestedness, no interest which it can be shown to serve. The fact remains that moralists do appeal to people to be disinterested, to be good, even (in some cases) to be critical. What I take to be the significance of this is that there is a real disinterestedness to which interest pays lip-service, that there is a real solidarity in goodness and that this is imitated by the spurious solidarity of "social unity"—partly because the real thing *is* useful (produces things that nothing else could produce) and partly as the best way of keeping the real thing in check. At the same time, because the other *is* spurious (because there are always cracks in the unity), it can never wholly eliminate goodness. This opposition, I suggest, between interest and disinterestedness, between convention and criticism, is what alone makes intelligible the confusion of moral terms and the persistence of relativism. And in this struggle propaganda (advocacy) is a mark of non-goodness, while it is a mark of goodness simply to insist on the facts, to expound and expose, let the results be what they may. The special importance of positive ethics here lies in its rejection of the conception of absolute right (of the imperative or mandatory), as against which it emphasises the *quality*, goodness. And it is on absolute right that moralistic ethics, the spurious science consecrated to social unity, takes its stand. Such a linking between conflicts in doctrine and conflicts in the field with which the doctrines are concerned will, of course, be peculiar to ethics, but it is only so, I urge, that the questions can be settled.

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## REVIEW.

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ART AND POETRY. By Jacques Maritain. Translated by E. de P. Matthews. Philosophical Library, New York, 1943. 104 pp. Price \$1.75.

MARITAIN has often suffered from his translators, but never so seriously as in this volume of essays. Sometimes the mistakes are of the school-boy kind, so that by substituting for the English expressions the French words which look most like them, the original can be re-discovered. Here is one of the worst examples: "If he reproached Picasso with seeking sources of *renovation* in Greek warriors and the museums, if he was angered by Picasso's indifference *on* the subject and his *will* for a 'pure painting'—'our Italian psychology', he said, 'revolts against this *gratuity*, an art without a subject is of an anti-Italian essence'—he understood nevertheless the importance of the reform *conducted* by Picasso and he adopted *for his own count*, in a fairly large measure, certain of the fundamental ideas of this reform. *One distinguishes here and there* in the production of Severini a futurist period and a cubist period" (p. 33; *my italics*).

But this method often fails us. What are we to make, for example, of this description of the music of Stravinsky—"shaken by tentatives, sometimes astonishing, of galvanization"? If Maritain were an exact and rigorous thinker, we might be less troubled; we would feel sure, at least, that when we were reading turgid nonsense, we were not reading Maritain. But, as it is, we are reluctant to blame the translator for "those monstrous miserable flesh-tints captured in the deaf harmonies and the precious transparencies of the most complex matter" (p. 37) or even, altogether, for the description of "the creative idea"—"it appears to consciousness, especially, in truth, as a decisive emotion, but an emotion transverberated by intelligence, a little cloud at first, but full of eyes, full of imperious visioning, charged with will, and avid to give existence" (p. 81).



Maritain, in fact, belongs to the "fine writing" school of critics, to those who feel that it is not the task of criticism to make anything clear, but to make everything ineffable. What passes as his "aesthetics" is not aesthetics at all, but simply metaphysics; a metaphysics excused from rigour by its pre-occupation with aesthetic creation. This appears immediately in the three essays with which the book opens, essays on Chagall, Rouault, and Severini, which illustrate admirably (no less because they are partially unintelligible) just how little this sort of criticism has to contribute to our knowledge of painting.

Chagall he describes as follows: "His clear eyes see all bodies in a happy light, he delivers them from physical laws, and makes them obey the hidden law of the heart: agile, free, without heaviness, sagacious and eloquent as the ass of Balaam, fraternal, sweetened one toward the other, the pig toward the poet, the cow toward the milkmaid" (p. 17). Compare this with the description, in a later essay, of the music of Manuel de Falla: "Harsh and knowing as is passion, discreet, secret, precise, and little by little transfigured within the deserts of prayer, the song of Manuel de Falla makes an eternal spring gush from the rock" (p. 95). Literature, painting and music are confounded each with the other; each is "human and expressive", each is to be described in terms of the creative activity of its maker.

This is a theological view of art; art itself is a secular thing, which is passed by as insignificant. What is significant is the mind that informs it. Art, like the world, is ontologically dependent. And aesthetic virtue, as we might expect, turns out to be Christian virtue. "Is it not a virtue already almost Christian—this taste for freshness and humility and difficult balances, for seeing the world thus from the edge of a happy catastrophe?" (p. 19)—this of Chagall. "It is an ontological music; in the Kierkegaardian style, one would also say 'existential'. It is born in the singular roots of being, the nearest possible to that juncture of the soul and spirit, spoken of by Saint Paul" (p. 97)—this of Lourié.

Sometimes, indeed, Maritain turns to the form of the created, as distinct from the virtue of the creative agency, but then we are driven back on mysteries. "In every canvas of Rouault, the forms fill out the space—a unique space, arisen for itself—with a mysterious necessity akin to that with which the natures of a universe fill out their boundaries" (p. 29). Aesthetics gives content to metaphysics, but at the same time metaphysics is used to "illuminate" aesthetics. Art is a stepping-stone to cosmic meanings, and these meanings determine what is aesthetically permissible.

It is about this latter point, especially, that Maritain's *Dialogues* turn. The "dialogues" which make up the second part of the book are, in form, aphorisms, but Maritain explains that they "are but the continuation, in written form, of some Parisian conversations and controversies: the interlocutors—André Gide, for instance, François Mauriac, Jean Cocteau, Charles du Bos, and some others—are present, as it were, behind the scenes, their voices being heard through their own works and writings" (p. 9). Gide's theory of "purity" and "sincerity" as aesthetic characters Maritain is especially anxious to criticise.

He is able to point out, of course, that Gide's "immoralism" is nothing but a species of moralism; that there is nothing peculiarly "pure" and "sincere" in a "gratuitous act"—that, in short, Gide himself is subordinating art to morality in this demand for "sincerity", although it is precisely against such a subordination that Gide is protesting. But the theory of "purity", muddled with moralism though it may be, is yet a recognition that the artist is concerned with structure, not with higher meanings. It is a rejection of the sort of view, profoundly anti-aesthetic, which Maritain goes on to formulate. "All sin is a sorry thing, injuring nature. There is no pure sin. The pure contour of impurity is an impure thing" (p. 51). The aesthetic view, intimately connected with secularism, is that a thing's nature is how it behaves, not what is ordained for it, that virtue is no more "pure" than vice.



To Maritain, however, to see a thing as it is involves passing beyond it. "One would have to be a saint", wrote Mauriac. "But then one would not write novels." And Maritain replies: "Sainthood is not the negation of human life. Saints have been kings, artisans, preachers, doctors, priests, painters, poets. Why should they not be novelists?" (p. 65). That "the devil collaborates in every work of art" is a view Maritain will not pause to consider, yet clearly hagiographers have no great need of a knowledge of art, whereas the diabolist would find it very useful. "A good part of current literature", says Maritain, "is positively possessed" (p. 47)—but is this peculiar to the modern period?

In the final essays, *The Freedom of Song*, Maritain's juggling of aesthetics and theology is at its most spectacular, and the translator is obviously dizzy. Maritain's object is to develop a theory of creation, and especially of the "creative idea" which shall at once not commit him to a primitive copy theory and enable him to retain the scholastic conception of *id ad quod respiciens artifex operatur*. "The creative idea", says Maritain, "is an intuitive flash (given at one stroke but unexpressed, and without contours) in which the whole work is potentially contained and which will unfold and explain itself in the work, and which will make of the work itself an original model" (p. 80).

Again and again, Maritain's "explanations" are of this order; in which all difficulties are resolved by the simple device of having it both ways. Thus Maritain asks "why should a musical work ever finish?" and answers "as the time of the world shall one time emerge into the instant of eternity, so music should cease only by emerging into a silence of *another order*, filled with a substantial voice, where the soul for a time tastes that time no longer is" (p. 82). *Obscurum per obscurius*—this is the sort of thing which gives aesthetics a bad name.

What is of interest in this volume of scattered essays (about their source, and original titles, the translator is silent) is not at all Maritain's aesthetic theology, or theologi-

cal aesthetics, but his scattered comments on artists he has known, and a certain penetration which derives largely from his Roman Catholicism, and protects him from the merely fashionable. Thus the essays on Rouault and Severini are, as *history*, illuminating; and the "dialogues", where the translator appears at her least intolerable (just because Maritain is relatively unpretentious) have considerable force and acuteness. But only the most ardent of Maritain's admirers are likely to gain much from a book composed of scraps and pieces, and translated with, to use one of the translator's most expressive phrases, such "redoubtable availability".

J. A. PASSMORE.

## NOTES AND NEWS.

### AUSTRALASIAN ASSOCIATION OF PSYCHOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY.

#### CANBERRA BRANCH.

A LOCAL BRANCH of the Association has been formed at Canberra, and a provisional committee has been elected. The officers are Mr. Q. B. Gibson (President), Mr. D. A. T. Gasking (Vice-President) and Miss Pam Macphail (Secretary-Treasurer). Anyone desiring to participate in the work of the Branch or seeking further information may write to the Secretary (P.O. Box 168, City, Canberra, A.C.T.).

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#### BRITISH PSYCHOLOGICAL SOCIETY.

#### FORMATION OF AN AUSTRALIAN BRANCH.

UNDER the chairmanship of Professor H. Tasman Lovell, an Australian Branch of the British Psychological Society has recently been established. Its objectives include the advancement and diffusion of a knowledge of pure and applied psychology, the setting up of high standards of professional education for psychologists, and the maintenance of strict rules of professional conduct. The Branch provides for five grades of membership, of which three—Associate, Fellow and Honorary Fellow—are a guarantee that those members achieving them have acquired full professional standing.